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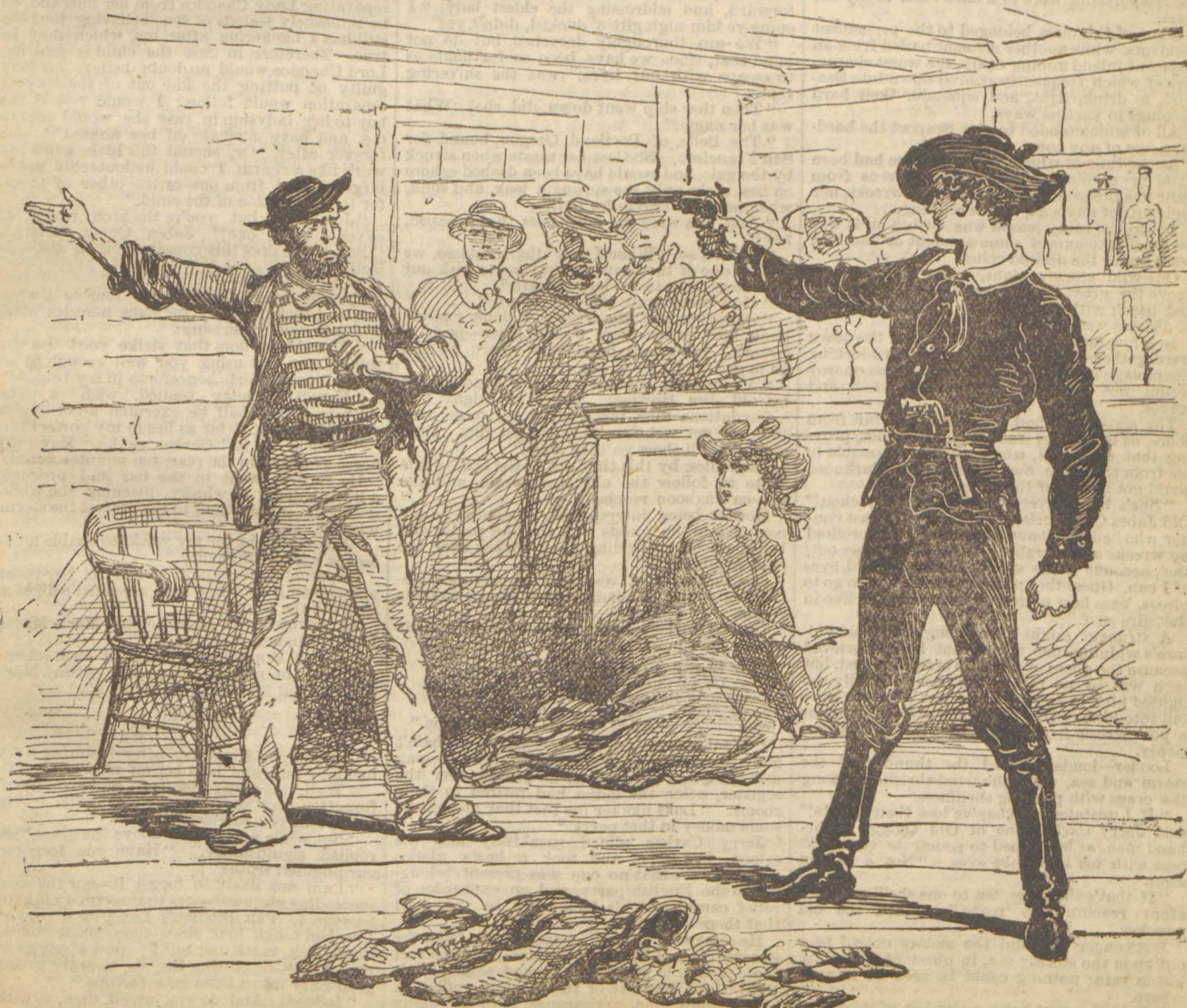
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No. 268.

DEADWOOD DICK'S DEATH TRAIL; or, From Ocean to Ocean.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,

AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, "ROSEBUD ROB" NOVELS, "GILT-EDGED DICK," "BONANZA BILL," ETC., ETC.



WITH A HORRIFIED OATH AT DEADWOOD DICK'S DEMAND, THE BULLY HELD UP HIS HAND, AND THERE FOLLOWED A FLASH, A REPORT AND A YELL.

Deadwood Dick's Death Trail;

OR,
FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN.

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CHAPTER I.

THE WRECK AND COAST VULTURES.

MANY miles up the rugged Pacific coast from San Francisco, going north, a little town nestles upon a sloping beach whereon huge boulders form a feature of the rugged landscape.

A rude collection of huts and shanties composes the town, such as usually tenanted by fishermen or wreckers, with a couple of saloons, and a few general stores.

We will call the place Seaport for want of a better name, as it was only known as Quigg's by those who knew of it, or ever ventured to it, from inland by stage.

Its harbor was rough and dangerous in the extreme, and could only be made by fishing sloops of light burden, but it was seldom that Seaport received a call from any vessel whatever.

Occasionally there was a wreck upon the coast, which to the inhabitants of the town, was a fortunate circumstance, and many hard stories were told by experienced sailors, of false beacon lights to lure vessels to destruction upon the rocks.

Which was not untrue, as the larger part of the Seaportians, were of a hard class to say the least.

Some of this class belonged to the permanent residents, while another element hailed from an adjacent inland mining camp, the worst characters of which frequently poured down into Seaport, to drink, fight, and squander their hard earnings in various ways.

All of which tended to give Seaport the hard-earned name of any town on the coast.

At the time of which we write, there had been little or nothing to arouse the citizens from their monotonous life—no fights, no wrecks, nor incidents of any sort, worth relating.

But as the rainy season was setting in, it was reasonable to expect some accident or incident would offer the desired relief.

One wild stormy night, when a fierce gale drove the great Pacific waves in upon the rugged beach with a thunderous roar, a signal gun of distress was heard off the town.

In a few minutes the inhabitants of the town were gathered at the shore, and a hard-looking assemblage it was—a bad crowd, whose mercy would not be less cruel than, the winds and waves.

The signal gun had not been fired far from shore, as the report was loud and distinct, proving that the vessel, which it was impossible to see from the shore, owing to the dense darkness, could not be far off the rocks.

"She's bein' driven in this way, I reckon!" Old Jabez Quigg cried—the grim old coast condor who had long haunted Seaport, and profited by wrecks innumerable. "Can't make her out, tho', account o' the spray, blarst my old eyes ef I can. Guess ther poor vessel will hev to go to pieces, 'case how no rescue boat can ever live in thet air surf."

A stranger might have thought the old vulture's whining tone meant that he was grieved because the doom of the ship seemed sealed, but such was by no means the case; it really delighted him to know that he was about to have fall into his hands a handsome prey—for it was a poor wreck from which he could not realize richly.

Louder—louder roared the thunder of the storm and sea, while the wind shrieked among the crags with piercing shrillness.

"If I mistake not, they've lost their masts!" said Jerry Carker, one of Old Quigg's right-hand men, as he seemed to penetrate the darkness with his hawk-like eyes. "Not a sail in sight."

"If that's ther case, ten to one she'll go down afore reachin' the rocks," whined the old wrecker.

With eager eyes did the motley crowd peer out upon the stormy sea, in quest of the ship, but in vain; nothing could be seen of it anywhere.

During the next hour, a number of pieces of wood and rigging came ashore, thus proving that the vessel had gone down, before having

time to reach and be dashed to pieces upon the rocks.

The disappointed and disgusted crowd was about to turn away, when Carker descried a dark object dashing in toward the shore, and gave vent to a cry of astonishment and joy.

It proved to be a ship's launch, and with startling rapidity the little craft was hurled high upon the beach, amid terrified cries from those within it.

The wreckers gathered around, holding their torches aloft to view the occupants of the boat.

These were four in number—three women and a little boy of four years.

The oldest of the women was perhaps thirty-eight years of age, stately of figure and lovely in countenance, her rich attire and general appearance indicating her superior social position.

The second lady—a girl of seventeen—was evidently the daughter, or else the younger sister of the first, as there was a strong resemblance between them.

The third female was probably not many years out of her teens, and might also have been voted handsome, although there was a marked difference between her type of beauty and that of her two companions, to whom she was evidently acting in the capacity of traveling maid.

Hers was a dusky countenance, of brilliant, even fascinating expression, with large, bold black eyes, a tempting mouth with pearly teeth, and a head burdened with a wealth of hair that any woman well might have envied.

The little boy looked somewhat like the stately lady, and doubtless was her son.

Jerry Carker, although the first to discover them, had no sooner taken a good sharp look at them than he quickly shrunk back out of sight, leaving old Quigg to act as reception officer.

"Waal, marm!" the old vulture said, stepping forward, and addressing the eldest lady, "I opine ye kim nigh gittin' ducked, didn't ye?"

"We are thoroughly drenched, but do not mind that, since we have been so fortunate as to escape with our lives!" was the shivering reply.

"Then ther ship went down, did she? What was her name?"

"The Belle, of Portland, Oregon, bound for San Francisco. She lost her masts when struck by the gale, and would have been dashed ashore on the rocks only she sprung a leak, and sunk, when not over two miles out."

"And you were the only ones that escaped, hey?"

"I think so. When I saw the masts go, we took to one of the boats, preferring to risk our lives thus, than in the larger craft."

"How many were there on board?"

"Ourselves and the crew. I don't exactly know how many there was of them—perhaps twenty. Is there a hotel here, where we can go to get dry?"

"Yas—thar's the tavern back yonder, kept by old Jim Howler. 'Spect ye might find 'comydations thar, tho' I allow it's more goes thar ter get wet than it is ter get dry. Cum along an' I'll show ye ther way!"

The ladies, by this time out of the boat, made haste to follow the old land pirate, and the tavern was soon reached.

Howler being interviewed, consented to accommodate the guests with the best parlor and bed-room off, providing they forked over the cash in advance.

One day's board was paid in advance, accordingly, and the ladies were shown to their rooms.

Upon Howler's unpretentious register their names were inscribed thus:

"LADY BEATRICE CHANDOS, London.
"LADY LEONA CLARE, "
"CAVANAUGH CHANDOS, "
"MILLE. MARIE, "
"All of Chandos Heath, London."

"Waal, neow, cuss my carcass, ef we hain't got a reg'lar nest of aristocrats down among us!" old Quigg growled, as he peered over the register, after the ladies had retired to their rooms. "Luks like ter me thet thar mought be some money in thet party."

Jerry Carker glided sneakishly into the saloon, just then, and took a hasty glance around to see that no one was present belonging to the English party, and an expression of relief came over his face when he perceived that there was not.

He somewhat differed in appearance from the general class of Seaport's citizens, from the fact that, though hawkish looking and slouchily attired, there was less of the genuine ruffian in his conduct and appearance than in many others around him.

His features were finer, and his face one that

might have been termed villainously handsome, with its sweeping black mustache, trimmed away enough at the mouth to expose a glittering exhibition of pearly teeth.

He wore his hair clipped close to his head; his eyes were black as a raven's; his form was one of evident great strength coupled with agility and endurance. He was clad in rough miner's garments, with top boots and a slouch hat.

He glided up to the office-counter, and peered over old Quigg's shoulder, at the register.

"Humph!" he grunted. "I thought I wasn't mistaken. Lady Chandos, eh? Well, of all surprises!"

"Tork's though you know'd her?" Jabez observed curiously.

"Reckon I orter," was Carker's sententious answer, "when she an' I uster be a good deal more ter each other than we be now. Jest give us yer ear, a bit, an' I'll bite a hole in it."

Quigg followed Carker to a quiet corner of the room, where they sat down, and Carker began in his rough vernacular:

"Now ye see this yere Lady Chandos is a purtickler mash o' mine, or uster be, an' I haven't given her up yet, although she's hitched to another lord over in London. I am of noble birth myself, but I got inter a deefkelty, an' hev fell a peg, after gittin' sent to Van Dieman's Land. Nevertheless I've bin keepin' an eye on family matters, an' allow my time ter play has jest cum!"

"Ye don't say so?"

"Bet your chips I do! I'm goin' ter hev revenge now!"

"In what way?"

"Oh, easy enough, now! I propose to steal the child, and keep it hidden away for a time. If I mistake not this will have the effect of separating Lady Chandos from her husband, as he is insanely jealous of her, believing that she still has a hankering after me, which may be true. Therefore, in case the child is missing, Lord Chandos would no doubt believe his lady guilty of putting the kid out of the way; a separation would follow; I would restore the boy to her ladyship in case she would marry me, and have a picnic off her annual income forever after. Or, should this little game not work like a charm, I could undoubtedly get a large reward from one or the other of them, for the restoration of the child."

"Jeminetta! but you're the arch rascal, ef evyer I see'd one!" Jabez Quigg declared. "But, what does this consarn you an' me, collectively?"

"Oh! as to that—"

Here the villain lowered his tone to a whisper, and spoke rapidly for some minutes, after which he said, on arising:

"There! how does that strike you? Do you think I am not using you well enough to secure all your efforts henceforth in my behalf?"

"Kerect!" Quigg replied, with a grin. "Every detail shall be executed according to your directions, so far as lies in my power!"

"Then so be it!" Carker said. "Have my horse awaiting in the rear, ten minutes hence."

He turned, went to the bar and procured a liberal drink of whisky, listening the while, with grim satisfaction, to the roar of the storm, without.

"Just the night for my work, to enable me to escape without difficulty."

Dispatching his liquor, he left the bar-room, and entering a narrow hall, ascended a flight of stairs to the next floor.

At the top of the stairs he met Marie Maros, Lady Chandos's attendant,

The two stopped and gazed at each other a moment, in mutual recognition—then Marie flung herself into his arms with a glad cry!

CHAPTER II.

A VILE SCHEME.

CARKER put her away, after enduring a momentary bug, and held her off at arm's length.

"Well, it is really you, is it? and you haven't forgotten me?" surveying her curiously. "Why I supposed you married, ere this!"

"Not while you remain above the grass," she replied significantly. "Have you forgotten our plighted troth?"

"I am not likely to forget it—nor the soon-succeeding circumstances that secured me a free passage to Van Dieman's Land, as a convict. I've had tough luck since then, Marie—cursed tough luck, mark me; but I'm now about on the eve of quitting cutting throats, in order to drop gracefully into a little good fortune."

"Indeed! And do you intend, then, to make good your solemn promise to me?"

"Most assuredly, providing you are sufficient."

ly interested in me to enter into my scheme and help further it to a success."

"Dearest of men! I assure you nothing could please me better than to work for your success!" was the response uttered in a tone that indicated the strength of her love for the man. "What is it you wish me to do?"

For Carker to relate his plans did not require much time.

Marie listened attentively, her face undergoing many changes of expression.

"Your plan is good," she said, when he had concluded. "I will help you in whatever way I can, still remaining in her ladyship's employ, until you are ready to claim me. But you must swear that, when all is achieved, you will then marry me!"

"By all I hold sacred, I swear that I will," Carker cried, dropping dramatically upon one knee. He then arose, kissed her, and said, hurriedly:

"Enough of this now. I must get to work. You say you have the child in your care?"

"Yes."

"Then in about ten minutes get him, and take him down the back stairs. You will find a shed in the back yard. Wait there until you hear me coming—then run up the stairs and give an alarm, by which time I and the kid will be a goodly ways off, and I'll defy them to find me! Is her ladyship alone in the parlor?"

"Yes—or was a few moments ago. Lady Clare is in the kitchen getting dry."

Carker's eyes twinkled villainously, as he passed on toward the parlor, while Marie went down-stairs.

Opening the parlor door, he boldly entered, and closed it behind him.

Lady Beatrice Chandos sat before a fire on the hearth, clad simply in a wrapper, which she had borrowed of the tavern-keeper's wife, and her damp hair fell carelessly over her shoulders.

Carker's eyes lit up with admiration, and he stepped forward with doffed hat, and smiling face.

"My dear Lady Beatrice, at last we meet after so many years!" he cried. "Do you not recognize me, my lady?"

"Indeed, sir, I do not, and I consider your presence here an intrusion!" was the haughty answer. "You will be kind enough to leave!"

"No! no! not till you know who I am!" Carker persisted. "I am your betrothed, Sir Ferrol Falconer!"

Lady Chandos had arisen haughtily a moment before, but at this declaration reeled back into her chair, with a gasping cry, her face as white as death, her eyes staring wildly, while Carker, as we shall still continue to call him, stood looking on, triumphantly.

"You!—you Ferrol Falconer! Oh! God!" her ladyship gasped, as soon as she could find her voice.

"Well, yes; I was Ferrol Falconer before I got transported, but now I'm plain Jerry Carker, one of the roughest roughs on the Slope—only about half-civilized since I fell away from your kindly influence. How was Chandos when you left him?"

"Very well, I believe," was the cold reply. "But how did you know of him?"

"Oh! I've kept posted, and I'll admit I was a little surprised that he should marry one who was to have been an outlaw's wife, but for the intervention of the law the day before our nuptials were to have been celebrated. Suppose he knew nothing of this?"

"Of course not. From the moment you brought disgrace upon me as well as yourself, by crime, I ceased to respect even your memory. Sir, the interview is prolonged too far already. Pray go!"

"Not yet, Beatrice. The sight of you to-night has rearoused all my old fierce passion for you. Oh Beatrice! look at me as I am now, and compare me with what I once was! You, and only you, can redeem me from everlasting hell. We are here together in this far-away country. Lord Chandos is in England, at his cards, wine, and midnight suppers, thinking naught of you until he recovers from the effects of his revelry, and then, seized with a fury of insane jealousy, he curses the very ground you walk upon, lest while he has been debauching, you, perchance, may have met your old true and faithful lover, Ferrol Falconer."

Lady Chandos sunk back again in her chair, faint and white, an expression of exquisite pain upon her features.

What did it mean?

Did she know that every word Carker uttered was the truth?

"True, I am not an attractive man now, Beatrice," he went on, "because I have allowed

myself to go wild like the other wild desperadoes in this rough region; but let me be encouraged—then mark the change!"

A sudden wave of fierceness swept over the face of the pallid lady. She sprung to her feet, her form drawn to its fullest height, her eyes flashing like diamond fire.

"Go! Ferrol Falconer—go! Remember that every word you are saying is an insult, as I am a married woman. Go!"

"I will go, but before I do go, I tell you that you will be sorry in more than one sense for your hasty decision. More—you will live to learn the truth of what I say, that no man loves you but me. I shall seek revenge, but in the end it will result in uniting two hearts into one, and in the saving in some degree of one man's soul. *Au revoir*, Lady Beatrice—*au revoir*!"

He knelt quickly, seized her hand and raised it to his lips, and then was gone almost in an instant.

Five minutes later Marie came rushing up the stairs, screaming at the top of her voice:

"Help! help! murder! thieves! kidnappers! Some robber has snatched Lady Chandos's son from my arms and fled! Help! Help, for God's sake!"

In her room sat Lady Chandos, still deathly white over her recent shock. She heard the terrible news; then the great strain of the evening's excitement upon her nerves caused her to fall off into a deep swoon, from which she did not awaken for hours.

CHAPTER III.

A DOUBLE SURPRISE.

THERE was sensation once more in Seaport over the kidnapping of Lady Chandos's pretty child.

When it was found that her ladyship had fainted, and consequently no news could be gained from her, Marie was taken in charge by Mrs. Howler, and made to give an account of the affair, which she proceeded to do in a hysterical, sobbing way.

She stated that she and little Cavanaugh had started down the back stairs *en route* for the kitchen, as they supposed, when along came a big, bad man rushing after them, snatched up the child, and disappeared down the stairs.

She could give no description of him, more than that he was a bold, brigandish-looking fellow.

When Lady Chandos was finally restored to consciousness by the united efforts of Mrs. Howler and Lady Clare, she was very calm.

"Oh! my lady, I trust you will forgive me, and believe it was not my fault!" Marie whined.

"Be still, Marie! I know you were not to blame. But you ought to have given chase and not allowed the villain to escape. I know him—he was in my room but a moment or so before I heard your cries. He calls himself Jerry Carker, and is a ruffian of the worst type. He came here to threaten me, and finding he could not do that successfully, has taken his revenge."

Her ladyship's declaration that it was Carker who was the bold kidnapper soon spread around the little town, and old Jabez Quigg immediately thereafter had an excuse to pay her ladyship a call.

"Excuse me, marm, 'case I'm so rough, ye see, but I jest heerd about yer losin' a child, an' thort I'd drap in ter see ef I couldn't help ye out of ther defickelty."

"I am sure your kindness will be greatly appreciated," her ladyship answered, simply, and yet with feeling. "I am sure if you can give me any news of my lost boy it will be most gratefully received. The loss to me is one of the greatest I could possibly have sustained."

"Waal, I reckon," Quigg assented, with a shrug, "tho' I war never blessed with any kids of my own. Ye see, I don't know for cert' jest whar yer kid might be jest at present; but I allow I do know where Jerry Carker's hang-out is up in the mountings jest as well as I know my own nose."

"Oh! thank Heaven," Lady Chandos exclaimed. "And you will go to the rescue of my darling?"

"That depends on circumstances, mum. Ef ye hev got money to pay fer my services, kereck, I'll go an' take ye along; ef ye hev'n't, durn my boots ef I kin see how I kin get a livin' doin' work for nothin'."

"I could not ask you to do such a thing. I yet have some money that I saved from the wreck, and will pay you handsomely if you will assist me to recover my little darling."

"Waal, then it's a bargain. Et's too wild

out to-night to venture inter the mountains, but ef et clears up by mornin', we will get an early start. Will you want to return this way in case ye recover yer child?"

"Not if we can go overland by stage, so as to reach the railway. I am tired and sick of roughing it in Western America."

"Then I will provide horses for the entire party, and we'll most likely get off by sunrise."

This was a great relief to Lady Chandos, for every moment's delay was positive torture to her.

But disappointment came the next morning, as regards their getting an early start, for the rain was pouring down in torrents, making it impossible to travel, so the start had to be postponed until the rain ceased, which was not until late in the afternoon.

During the forenoon several mountain characters rained down into the town, among whom was a little bent old man, with a painful hump on his back, and who seemed barely able to hobble along, even with the aid of the two staffs he carried.

Little of his face could be seen owing to the mass of snow-white hair and beard that covered it.

About as well-fitted for an undertaker's services, was he, as any other odd character that had ever landed down in Seaport, and he was surveyed by the *habitués* of Howler's saloon with much curiosity.

Decrepit as he was, however, he managed to hobble up to the bar and order his whisky, which he downed with great gusto.

"See hyar, old goblin!" ejaculated Bill Fargo, the pronounced bully of the town, "you ain't lost yer lip fer bug-juice yet, I see."

"A very, very leetle, jest ter soften my rheumatism!" the old crook replied, in a squeaky voice.

"Yas, whisk' is a great limberer!" Fargo asserted. "I know, 'case I've bin tryin' it these many years, but I've occasionally got so stiff w' ther consarned critter that I've not bin able to move for a long spell. But I tell ye, old man, what aise the best thing to limber ye up—*this*!"

And he dealt the old chap a tremendous slap on the hump upon his back, that caused him to utter a howl of pain.

Up went the ruffian's hand to inflict another blow, but it was caught before it descended and held in a grasp that was by no means loose, although it belonged to a woman.

And the woman was pretty Lady Clare, with pale face and flashing eyes. Passing through the hall on her way up-stairs, she had seen the assault of the bully.

"Stop! stop! You cowardly ruffian!" she cried. "Have you no manhood about you, to thus strike a poor defenseless cripple? For shame!"

Fargo surveyed his accuser for a moment in mingled astonishment and awe, then, suddenly flaming with anger and mortification, at being interrupted by a weak woman, he snatched his wrist from her grasp and dealt her a slap in the face that knocked her to the floor almost senseless.

It was a brutal act even for a man of Fargo's type, and he had cause not to forget it soon. For he heard a wild, ringing yell, and he and the others turned to stare at the crook-back, from whom the cry came.

But no hunchback was there now; instead, behold the transformation!

Upon the floor lay a white wig, beard and a suit of rags!

And before the assembled crowd stood a man of striking appearance, with a resolute, handsome, beardless face, and a pair of eyes that were piercing and magnetic.

His garb was jetty black, now, and a belt about his waist contained a handsome revolver, in addition to one he held in the grasp of his right hand.

Fargo uttered a gasp, at the sudden change, while Dick of Deadwood—for the new-comer was none other than that famous character—pointed sternly to the floor, his eyes flashing with a deadly light.

"Brute, behold your cowardly work. For to you shall pay dearly. I'll learn you a lesson you'll not soon forget. Hold up the hand with which you struck that brave young lady."

Fargo growled, and disobeyed.

"Waal, I reckon not!" he swore. "I ain't sech a ninny as that!"

"Up with it," cried Deadwood Dick, firmly. "It's your only chance to save your life. If I den't put a bullet through between your fingers, to avenge this young lady, I shall certainly put one through your heart. Be decide instants. One, two, th—"

With a horrified oath at Deadwood Dick's demand, the bully held up his hand, and there followed a flash, a report and a yell.

The bullet had pierced the palm of the fellow's hand, and cut its way clear through, making not only a painful wound, but also a mark that was liable to cling to him all his life.

"There!" Dick cried, sternly. "You'll probably know better than to insult a young lady again, by slapping her. If I ever catch you at such work again, I'll kill you."

He turned, and strode from the saloon, and not a hand was raised to hinder him, albeit, Seaport was counted one of the roughest places for a single man to get into trouble anywhere along the Slope.

Lady Clare also went to her room, a great deal excited at her strange adventure, and wondering who was her handsome young rescuer.

Late that afternoon the rain ceased to fall, and, as Lady Chandos urged that an immediate start be made, the horses were brought around, and the party mounted, consisting of Lady Chandos, Lady Clare, Marie, and the old land pirate and wrecker, Jabez Quigg.

Leaving the coast town, they ascended a narrow and rugged mountain trail, bordered on one side by beetling cliffs, and on the other by a deep, dark abyss, many feet deep.

In the course of an hour, they struck a stretch of highland country which was level for miles, and set out across it, Old Quigg in the lead.

For several hours they rode on. The sky overhead became clear, and the moon, nearly full, rolled up with beautiful effect from behind the horizon, giving to the landscape a picturesque appearance.

About this juncture Old Quigg drew rein, and allowed the others to come up.

"Thort to make ther trip interestin', an' give ther horses a chance ter blow, ye brought not object ter heerin' a story, w'ich ain't no darned fiction, but reg'lar downright facts," Quigg averred. "Did ye heer tell on Guarez, the red-handed Mexican bandit?"

"Oh! no! no! do tell us!" fly-away Lady Clare cried.

"Be brief," Lady Beatrice said, with impatience. "I am more anxious to get to my abode than to listen to improbable bandit stories."

"Nothin' improbable about this, I tell ye, neow. Waal, ye see et ain't werry long. A few years ago, down in Mexico, this Guarez launched out in bizness by killin' his first man, at the age o' twenty-five. But, Lor'y! thet waren't nothin'. I killed mine when I war only six year old—put arsenic in ther old man's coffee, for sugar. But, as I war sayin'—he killed his man, and then lit out. He was caught, and invited to a Jeck-tie party; but, bless you, he slipped away from 'em like a streak o' greased lightnin' from the hands of a soap-maker."

"Arter that he us'ter lay abouts, heer and thar, an' catch onter rich gals an' wimmen, an' et warn't long ago that he anchored up in this heer kentry. Ye see, he catches onter anything wot's got plenty o' money behind it, and freezes to it till some one comes along and pays over a good sum to get a release. Hope ye ain't got many spondulics w' ye, marm."

"Why?" Lady Beatrice said, in alarm—"are we in any danger of being captured by that bad man?"

Quigg nodded his head in a rather grim fashion.

"Thar's no tellin'. I've took parties across the kentry a pile o' times, an' given ther cuss the slip; but, ag'in, I've been caught, an' my parties made to fork over handsome. But we'll jog along, an' I'll keep a weather eye out, and like enough we'll dodge 'em. Ef we kin only get to yonder dark line of timber, we're all hunk, I guess."

They then started the old wrecker in the lead, as usual, and pretending to keep a sharp lookout, when in reality he was doing nothing of the kind.

The ladies were pretty well frightened except Marie, who, having nothing of particular value to lose, did not have so much concern.

"Mercy, what should we do if we were to lose our money?" Lady Beatrice said, in a scared tone. "We should have to wait in this wild country until we could hear from England."

"I'll fight for mine!" Lady Clare decided, firmly.

"You had both better turn your money and valuables over into my keeping, until we are out of danger. If captured, I would very likely not be searched, being a lady's maid."

Lady Beatrice smiled faintly.

"I don't think it would do to trust to your

exemption from search. The robber might take a fancy to you."

Marie frowned her displeasure at the implied want of confidence in her integrity, but did not reply audibly.

"Can it be that she suspects me of complicity in this affair?" she mused. "If I was sure of it I'd choke her!" and her black eyes flashed viciously.

They rode on, anxiously expectant.

When they were within half a mile of the wood border, old Quigg once more drew rein.

"What is the matter, now?" Lady Chandos demanded, with a shiver of dread.

"Nothin' much, 'cept that we're at the end of our journey. Look about you."

They did, and saw, out on the high grass on every side masked men rising, armed with carbines.

"I suppose you comprehend the significance," Quigg chuckled. "You are surrounded by the brave men of Guarez the bandit, whose veritable self I am, and now you will kindly allow me to suggest, is the proper period for you to fork over your cash and jewelry, and save trouble and costs!"

CHAPTER IV.

DEADWOOD DICK'S DOUBLE QUEST.

HAD a thunderbolt fallen among the little party it could hardly have more surprised the two English ladies, while as for Marie, she did not seem very much troubled.

"Sir! do you mean to say that you have been so base as to deceive and betray us?" Lady Chandos cried, indignantly, gazing at the old wretch with flashing eyes.

"Yas, I have been just sur-base!" the villain replied, with attempted facetiousness. "I war figgerin' on a large amount o' spondulics out o' this yere catch, an' I opine I won't get left on it, nuther."

"Monster!"

"Oh, call me all the front-parlor pet names ye want, mum; I ruther like 'em, I do. But 'tain't goin' ter do ye a bit o' good, more'n to blow off yer steam. You're prisoners, an' you've got to come to terms, jest like docile ducks, and don't ye fergit it!"

He gave a wave of his hand then, and the masked men immediately formed in a circle around.

"Bind the captives' arms to their sides, and then, after blindfolding them, take them to Black Gulch," was Quigg's order, and the ladies were obliged to suffer their wrists to be bound and eyes blindfolded.

Their horses were then led away, and they could hear the footfalls of the balance of the band in their rear.

The journey was a long one, and the captives could judge by the frequent stumbling of the horses that they were being taken into an even rougher country than that behind them.

Finally a halt was made, and the ladies were assisted to dismount. The bandages were removed from their eyes, but their hands were kept bound behind their backs.

It was just daybreak, and they were able to dimly discern their whereabouts. They were in a deep gulch, which looked more like a natural dungeon, with blackened walls rising on every hand to a tremendous height.

Upon the bottom, where they had halted, there were bones of animals, all bleached and ghastly, while in one instance a human skull was visible lying upon the rocks.

There were half a dozen rude cabins, and one of these bore the sign "Saloon" over its door.

It was a den such as wolves and kindred wild animals usually haunt, and certainly was a fitting rendezvous for the human wolves who had captured Lady Chandos and her party.

After they had taken a good look about them, Jabez Quigg once more approached and doffed his greasy old hat.

"Thar, mums, ye see what sort of a place Guarez, the bandit, lives in, don't ye? Thar's but one possible way to escape from here, and that's triple guarded, always. Neow let me read ye ther rules and regulations, an' then ye'll know how to act."

He took a greasy piece of paper from his pocket, and began:

"Firstly: Every person on arrival here shall peaceably deliver up all his or her valuables, without hesitation or demur, to the chief, and shall make no attempt to escape, at peril of forfeiture of life. A ransom will be imposed, which if not satisfactorily settled, after first day, one toe will be amputated, as a reminder that we mean business. Each succeeding delay of one day will call forth another amputation, which will be continued until the whole body is cut up, in default of payment of the ransom."

"So beware! The rules of Guarez were never known to fail to be carried out to the letter. So deliver up your valuables at once, and you will then not be molested until I fix upon a suitable ransom."

"Oh! sir, pray do not take all we have, but instead, accept a part, and allow us to go in search of my stolen son!" Lady Beatrice cried, piteously. "If I do not recover him soon, I may never see him again."

Quigg laughed, loudly.

"Ef ye evyer set p'pers on that kid, again, ye'll hev ter marry Jerry Carker, that's all," he declared, "fer Jerry tol me so, hisself. As fer ther spondulics, I want 'em all, ter once, or I'll set ther boys ter s'archin' fer em. Ef ye've got 'em unconvenient, ye kin jest step into one o' the cabins, an' relieve yerself o' 'em."

Lady Chandos gave a despairing sigh, and motioned her companions to follow her to the cabin, nearest at hand, Quigg first having released the hands of Marie.

In the cabin the ladies removed a part of the money, and secreted it in a place where it was not apt to be noticed; then took the remainder, together with some very costly jewels, and gave them to Marie to hand to Quigg, which she did, and he went off, apparently satisfied, as the harvest aggregated much more in value than he had really expected.

As the cabin was supplied with some rude furniture, the ladies decided to occupy it during such time as they should remain in the bandits' stronghold.

The day passed, without their again being molested by Quigg. At meal hours, a masked outlaw brought them some meat upon a wooden tray, and then departed.

During the afternoon, young Lady Clare ventured out into the gulch. She was a brave girl, who at all times was ready to protect and defend herself.

She moved about here and there, independently, followed by admiring glances from the outlaws, none of whom, however, offered to molest or address her.

In the further corner of the gulch, she presently spied some pretty wild flowers growing up on a pocket in the rough wall.

Determined to possess them, after some difficulty she succeeded in clambering up the rock and plucking them, and was about to clamber back again, when, chancing to glance along the shelf, she beheld a man crouching on the narrow ledge, watching her.

She gave a little cry at sight of him, for she saw that he was masked and dressed like the other bandits.

Immediately upon her outcry, he raised his hand, admonishingly.

"Sh!" he said in a tone just audible. "I am not an enemy, but a friend, here for the purpose of rescuing you. Return to the cabin, and I will join you as soon as practicable."

"Who are you?" Lady Clare demanded, fancying she had heard the voice before.

"I am Deadwood Dick," was the reply—"the man who punctured the hand that slapped you, over in Seaport. But, tarry not, lest suspicion be attracted to this spot, which would be disastrous to our mutual interests."

Feeling decidedly relieved at what she had heard, Lady Clare descended from the ledge, and went back to the cabin, where she communicated the good news to her despondent sister—for such was the relationship between the two ladies.

The prospect of escape brightened her up very much.

Toward evening an unusual bustle was noticeable in the gulch. The bandits were collecting on horseback, as if with the intention of leaving the rendezvous for a raid, as all were armed to the teeth.

After a deal of consultation, they rode away down the gulch, and soon disappeared from view.

Only five men were left in the valley—Old Jabez Quigg being among the number.

"I wonder what desperate errand those ruffians are going on?" Lady Chandos murmured, with a shudder. "Oh! where is Cavanaugh, my boy?"

"Take courage sister!—Perhaps this coming friend, Deadwood Dick, can help to find the child?"

"God grant we may be able to enlist his services in our behalf!" Lady Chandos sighed, "for what could we do alone? I fear we shall never see my little son again."

"Oh, don't despond. If you had half the grit I have, no amount of loss could make you give up hope."

About an hour later, the cabin door was

burst rudely open, and Quigg and his four companions, fled into the apartment, where the three captives were seated.

Seeing that the ruffians were all under the influence of liquor, and that her sister had turned deadly pale, Lady Clare leaped to her feet, haughtily.

"Ruffians, what means this intrusion?" she cried, angrily.

"Sit down, sissy—don't get excited!" Quigg said, provokingly. "Children should be seen not heard. Lady Chandos, I have fixed your ransom for you and your party, at the moderate sum of fifty thousand dollars, and have, moreover, decided to close the matter up at once. So please write me out a draft on yer bank, after which ye will only be detained long enough ter allow me ter git ter Omaha or Denver, and have the money drawn."

"Never!" Lady Chandos cried, firmly, as she arose to her feet. "You have received from me every penny you shall ever get!"

"Not so, fair lady. I am the last man in ther world ter be trifled with. When I mean bizness, I mean it. Write out the draft, or off comes a finger from your hand, and one also from the hands of each of your companions. Number Four, bring in the block and hatchet!"

The order was obeyed.

This block was mounted upon legs, and the top of it was much hacked up, and profusely stained with blood.

Judging from its present proposed use, it was the fatal block which had been the scene of the brutal amputation of more than a score of fingers, on previous occasions.

At sight of the terrible object, the three women shuddered, and turned pale; but Lady Chandos quickly recovered herself; her face became flushed with indignation and the fire of a true Briton entered her eyes.

"Ruffian!" she cried, drawing her figure in proud defiance to its fullest height, "do not suppose for an instant that your most bloodthirsty purpose could make me yield to your request. I loathe and defy you. There!" and she placed her fair left hand upon the block. "I was a warrior's daughter. Cut the whole hand off if it will gratify your demon heart!"

Lady Clare and Marie, with frightened cries, attempted to rush forward, but were hauled back by two of the bandits.

Quigg, steeped in villainy as he was, stood for an instant dumfounded by the beautiful woman's pluck; but soon, the old ugly gleam crept back into his eyes, and a malicious grin upon his face.

"Very brave, bet yer!" he said, "but ye war mighty keeful ter reserve yer fightin' hand, which is perfectly O. K. I'll fix it fer ye!"

With brutal satisfaction expressed all over his face, he seized the hatchet, and raised it to strike the blow.

An instant of suspense, then—

Two piercing screams—

A rifle report—

A heavy fall and a groan.

Jabez Quigg lay upon the floor, a stream of blood spouting from his temple.

Bang!

Another report, and another fall. This time one of the men who had accompanied Quigg to the cabin.

With yells of consternation the remaining outlaws turned and fled, pell-mell from the room, following which there was an exchange of shots on the outside. Then a shadow darkened the doorway, and Deadwood Dick stepped into the cabin!

A quick glance showed him that neither of the three ladies was harmed, and Lady Clare, uttering a cry of joy, ran forward and put her hands in his.

"Oh! sir, you are a noble man, and I am sure the Lord will forgive you for killing these wretches!" she said, looking up into his face, earnestly.

"If he don't, I reckon I've had a heap of satisfaction in passing in their checks!" the knight of the West replied.

"Such brutes as those are worse curses on the face of the earth than any known pests, except Texas musketoes. I am glad my arrival and its result was so opportune."

All the ladies were deeply impressed with the appearance of the dashing man of the mountains, who, without his usual mustache and imperial, looked somewhat boyish.

"I am very thankful to you for risking so much in our behalf!" Lady Chandos said, "and must also thank you for a former service to my sister, here. I hope it has put you to no inconvenience, in coming to our rescue?"

"By no means, and even if it had, I should

have made the same attempt to free you from what I feared at the start was a trap; hence I followed. Your mission and mine, is, in one respect, identical. You want to see the rascal Jerry Carker, and so do I. I want his scalp—you want your child. With your approval, I will endeavor to get both, and give you your choice of the trophies."

The ladies shivered a little at his liberality, while he went on:

"My handle is Deadwood Dick, and you may have heard of me, for I've been rather a tough cuss, I'll admit. But a few months ago, I and my wife, Calamity Jane, settled down for good, up country, on a little ranch of our own. Our next neighbors war fine people, but unfortunately rich, an' a target for ruffians to aim at. The old gentleman, in particular, was a man to the backbone, and he an' I were inseparable friends. He had a fair daughter, and what does this rough, Carker, do, but come along one night, set an evil eye on her, and offer her insult. When the old gent heard of it, he had Carker flogged, and driven off. You see that?"—and he held up a bit of human scalp, the locks of hair upon which were long and white as snow. "They found the old gent a few nights after, wi' this beside him, and the letter 'C' cut in his forehead. The family were paralyzed with grief, but the horror and indignation I felt surpassed theirs, and when I bid 'em and Calamity good-by, I told 'em I shouldn't be back until I was sure Jerry Carker was where there is no chance for him to do any more scalping jobs. First your child—then his life."

CHAPTER V.

NELLIE THE WAIF.

"To trap this man, Carker, will require shrewd planning and indomitable perseverance!" Dick went on. "It will require money, too—but, perhaps we can find a plenty in this brigand den. I will make a thorough search, at any rate, before leaving the valley."

Old Quigg and the other ruffian had expired almost instantly, and were now stiffening corpses.

But this fact did not seem to appall the avenger, for he went through their clothing with a celerity that must have astonished a professional pickpocket, and succeeded in bringing to light a sum of money nearly double the amount that the ladies had surrendered to the outlaw.

Delivering up their past, Dick appropriated the balance, after which he went out into the valley to make a reconnaissance.

Discovering no signs of the enemy, he returned to the cabin, and bade the ladies prepare to start as soon as possible.

"The first place we'll strike for will be the San Jacin mines, to the eastward, which will in all probability be the first place Carker will strike on his route. He is a cunning rascal, and I think he suspects that I am already on his trail. Therefore he will naturally work eastward, where he thinks to puzzle me. But he will get left if he conceives that I will give up the chase; I'll follow him to the ends of the earth but what I will have him. I see there are enough horses in the gulch to mount us; so while you get ready, I'll secure them."

As night was fairly settling over the earth, they were all mounted, and Deadwood Dick led the way out of the mountain stronghold through a narrow gap, and then all rode away through a mountain gorge, which ran eastwardly, walled in on right and left with mighty towering cliffs.

The ride continued during the night through some of the roughest country the ladies had ever seen, but it was no novelty to Dick, who had literally grown up among rocks and boulders.

Once, about the middle of the night, Lady Clare, who was in the rear, gave vent to a scream, which caused an instant halt.

"Hello! what is the matter?" Dick cried, wheeling his horse around, while the others echoed his cry.

Lady Clare's deathly white face was visible, even through the darkness.

"Oh! oh!" she gasped—"I saw him! I saw him! He was walking right alongside my horse, just a moment ago! Oh! oh!"

"Who?" demanded Deadwood Dick.

"Who?" cried Lady Chandos, anxiously.

"The man who slapped me," gasped Lady Clare. "He walked beside my horse for an instant, and nearly made me faint by the terrible expression of hatred upon his face."

"You were dreaming," Dick suggested, "half asleep on your horse."

"No, sir, I was never more awake in my life.

I am no coward, nor am I prone to frights. I saw the man, and am willing to swear to it."

"If that ruffian is really following us, he has an object in it, and it may be that he is acting as a rear guard for our genial friend Clarker. I'll keep an eye out for him."

They continued their ride, and made the best time possible, until the next noon, when they arrived at San Jacin, a little Spanish-American town, whose principal industry was placer mining.

Its inhabitants were of the usual lawless kind, and the street scenes were identical with those in many other towns, the dance-houses, saloons, and gaming dens doing the best traffic, by far.

Conducting the ladies to the only respectable tavern in the place, Deadwood Dick set out on a tour of reconnaissance about town, wondering if in this strange place he would meet any one who knew him.

The first thing he did was to visit a pawnbroker's shop, one of which profitable luxuries exists in nearly every mining town.

Always among the stock in trade are to be found various styles of disguises.

Many Western characters are compelled by a force of circumstances to resort to disguises to save being lynched, while others use them to further some particular private scheme.

Not knowing what minute he might need to conceal his identity, Dick selected a variety of wigs, beards and other apparatus, and concealed his purchases about his person.

He then betook himself to the post-office, and spent an hour in watching and studying the different characters who came in and inquired for mail. When the window was vacant for a few minutes, he approached.

"Has any one called here recently for letters for Jerry Carker?" he inquired of the clerk.

"Yas, this mornin'!" was the short reply; but it satisfied Dick that for the present, at least, he was on the right trail.

But where was Carker? Had he already flown, or was he still lurking around the town.

Cautious inquiries, on Dick's part failed to elicit any news during the afternoon, so he returned to the tavern and made known what he had discovered, to the ladies, who seemed pleased—all except Marie.

Whenever mention was made of Carker's probable capture, a steel-like glitter would creep into her eyes, and a sort of grayish pallor suffuse her face.

Dick's sharp eyes noticed this on several occasions, and he jotted the matter down in his memory.

"That woman evidently is not very particular whether Carker is caught or not," he mused, "and I'll wager a detective's guess that she is not overburdened with scruples. I must keep an eye on her; she'll bear watching."

When it came dark again, he set forth and made a tour of the saloons, gaming-houses and dance-houses.

The first named were, as a rule, filled with half-drunken miners, who were awakening the echoes with Bacchanalian song.

The gaming rooms were more quiet and orderly, and held a better class of people—at least as far as personal appearance was concerned.

In neither of these places did Dick see anything of Carker: so he sought out the principal dance-house, where music and Terpsichorean revelry had a decidedly spirited airing.

The majority of course was composed of males, but there were also not a few of the opposite sex, and not all bad, by any means, as it would seem, but in a majority of cases decent, so far as respectability is concerned—women reared amid scenes of hardships and rude excitement peculiar to the border, who, in many cases, had no choice left but to live as best they could and act lives they hated for a paltry sum of money, to secure their maintenance.

Among those upon the floor Dick spied a young, trimly built girl of seventeen, with an intelligent, pretty face. She was struggling in the grasp of a disgusting looking ruffian, who was, apparently, endeavoring to force her to dance.

The others were paying no particular attention to the struggle, which probably was nothing unusual in the place.

There was an expression of disgust and loathing upon the face of the girl that alone was sufficient evidence of her purity.

Dick watched the scene for a moment, estimating whether it was best or not to interfere; but when he perceived that the rough "half the seas o'er" with bad bug-juice, he did not stop to consider longer but stepped briskly forward.

"Release your hold upon that girl!" he cried, in tones that instantly attracted the attention of every one in the room.

The ruffian, bushy-bearded and sinister, glared at Dick with a stupid expression upon his face.

"What yer say?" he growled. "I'm Bulldog Ben, I am!"

"Oh! sir, please make him release me!" the girl cried, appealingly. "He is crushing my arm."

"Release that girl!" Dick thundered, taking a step nearer, his fists doubled and a dangerous light in his eyes.

"I won't!" Bulldog Ben declared, doggedly.

The words had hardly left his lips, when there was heard a resounding whack, as Deadwood Dick's fist struck the forehead of the ruffian.

Bulldog Ben released his hold upon the girl, clutched wildly at the air, and then went down upon the floor.

A dozen roughs instantly sprung toward him, and a pitched fight ensued, in which Deadwood Dick came out victorious, by knocking one after another down, until the whole number lay stretched out on the floor.

"There! is there another batch ready?" he cried, looking round. "If there is, send 'em along, and I'll hustle 'em off, while I'm at it!"

A dead silence for the moment reigned within the saloon, until the rescued girl pulled at Dick's coat-sleeve and said:

"Come. Go with me. This is a hard den, and the sooner you get out of it now, the better. Besides, I want to talk with you."

Dick gazed at her a moment, and then turned to the rough audience.

"Please say for me, after these loafers wake up, that if they want more, I shall be in town several days yet, and can likely accommodate them."

He then turned and followed the girl from the dance house. She led the way to an out-of-the-way spot, and turned and faced him.

"You must think me a public character," she began, "but I ain't. I'm a girl that can't be run on, and I admire men like you who ain't afraid to take a woman's part. I perceive that you are a man of steel, as they express it, here in the West, and I'll bet you're every inch a gentleman, too, so I just want to ask you a question—or two of them. First, what is your name?"

Dick laughed.

"Why do you ask?" he queried.

"Simply out of curiosity to know who you are that was so brave?"

"Well, I'm called Deadwood Dick, sometimes—a pretty tough name in the West, corresponding with the man that bears it."

"Is it possible! I've heard of you. Well, my name is Nellie Dean. I belong in New York. What I wanted to ask is this: Do you know of any way a penniless but respectable girl can get from here there? I'm willing to work at anything, as long as it is honest and respectable, so I can get back to my friends!"

"You say you belong in New York, Nellie? How is it, then, that you are out in this country among such rude associations as I saw you to-night?"

"Since you ask, I will tell you," and tears sprung into her eyes. "I am an orphan, my parents both having been lost at sea when I was a child. I then went to live with a widowed aunt. Two years ago we came West. I was only fifteen then, and knew but little of the world, but I awoke to my ignorant innocence when we arrived in Utah, where my aunt told me every man had from one to ten wives. We were not there long ere my aunt married a Mormon elder, who was many years younger, and had three wives already. It was not long before they wanted me to marry an old gray-haired man, and you can bet I said no. They shut me up, then, and tried to force me to, but I escaped them and from Utah. Since then I've been tramping here and there, trying to get a living, but not much luck have I had, when I've not at any one time had enough money to take me East."

"What brought you to the dance-house?"

"No bad motive, I assure you. I am stopping with a miner and his wife, until I can do better. The latter is suspicious that her husband frequents the dance-houses, and paid me to find out for her. I had hardly got into the den when the big ruffian attempted to haul me into the dance."

Dick looked the girl over keenly and then said:

"I am going East on a detective trip. If you desire, I will take you along, you to assist me in any little spying jobs that I may elect."

"Good! It's a bargain! When shall I report for duty?"

"To-morrow, sunrise. I want to hunt up a man named Carker."

"You do? Why I saw him leave town early in the day. He had a fight in the street and was forced to leave."

CHAPTER VI.

MARIE SHOWS HER HAND.

THE next morning they all left San Jacin for Gander's Gulch, another mining town to the eastward, which Dick concluded Jerry Carker would be liable to strike, as it was on his route.

Dick could see that Ladies Clare and Chandos did not exactly fancy the idea of Nellie Dean's being added to the party, but he did not care, as he resolved to see the girl back to her eastern home, at all hazards, and might also much need her services. Lady Clare, more particularly, appeared to be a little piqued, for without appearing to do so, she had been endeavoring to win the special attentions of the dashing Prince of the Road, but Dick's heart was far away, in the keeping of Calamity, and he was not eager to even attract the notice of the gentler sex, as he only too well knew that flirtation worked trouble at the best.

He took considerable interest in Nellie, however, for further acquaintance proved her to be a most charming girl, full of the wit and sparkle of innocent womanhood, that could but win her friends anywhere.

Two days and one night of steady travel brought them to Gander Gulch, which was a fair-sized mining town, with considerable life and bustle about it.

Securing rooms for the ladies at the hotel, as in the last town, Dick went forth on a tour of reconnaissance, and had not gone far when he spied a man whom he knew. It was the bully of Seaport, Fargo! He was strolling along, watching the miners at work, his maimed hand done up in a bundle of rags.

Quickening his steps, he overtook the ruffian, and slapped him on the shoulder.

"Hold up!" Dick cried, authoritatively. "Seems to me I've seen you're purty phiz somewheres."

Fargo wheeled, and then uttered an oath.

"Seems to me so, too," he repeated, looking ruefully at his injured hand. "What the devil d'ye want o' me anyhow, cuss ye?"

"I want to know what brings you so far away from Seaport?" Dick demanded, sternly.

The bully emitted a growl.

"Dunno what's it yer bizness long's I ain't disturbin' you."

"It makes a deal of difference!" Dick retorted.

"You ain't so far from your home for nothing. I am aware just what you are up to, my lark, and you can bet on it. You're dogging me, watching out for a chance to trap me—that, too, at the instance of the villain Jerry Carker!"

The declaration only brought a bulldog sort of expression into the ruffian's face.

"Well, what of it?" he gritted. "As long as I ain't teched you ye can't complain, I am sure."

"But, mark you this!" Dick cried. "I'll let you off now, but just as sure as I catch you dogging me hereafter, just so sure will I send a bullet through your brain. Where is your associate, Carker?"

"Out of your reach. He left this morning for Frenchville."

Dick knew this was a lie.

Frenchville lay fifty miles to the north, off the main line of travel, and very few ever went there.

He knew that the ruffian would not be likely to stop in the mining country of the West at least.

Giving Fargo a parting warning, Dick returned to the hotel, and consulted his pocket map while he smoked in the parlor.

From Gander Gulch three stage trails diverged in northeastern, southeastern and eastern directions, all leading to towns beyond the divide, or water-shed.

Which one to take he was a little at loss at first, not knowing which one the kidnapper had pursued.

He was still puzzling over the matter when Nellie Dean came tripping into the room, looking like a modern fairy in a pretty traveling dress which Dick had given her the means to purchase.

"Well, I'm ready to resume the journey you see," she said, with a merry laugh. "I don't know how to thank you enough for your kindness to me, Mr. Dick. And, oh! what do you think that nasty Frenchwoman said? She had the impudence to ask me where I made a raise of the money to get this dress with! I just don't

like her a bit. But, Mr. Dick, I have got some news for you that you will value."

"Have you, indeed? Well, let's hear it."

"This is it. I was down in the hall a bit ago when the man who keeps the post-office came in and asked the landlady if she had a guest named Miss Toodles. I overheard the inquiry, and at once stepped forward and laid claim to the letter, as it popped into my head that maybe it might be of service to you."

Dick whistled.

"Well, you're cute!" he said. "So you calculated Miss Toodles might turn out to be Marie, eh?"

"Yes; just that and nothing else."

"Well, let's see. Perhaps you are right. If so, you shall be enlisted on the regular detective force when we get to New York."

He opened the letter and perused its contents. It read as follows:

"TOODLES—I leave by southeastern route, with a view of striking into the Leadville country. You be sure to take the northeastern trail, and then there will be no danger. K."

"It is evident that you are right. Marie and Carker are in correspondence, with a view of outwitting me. Does it not look that way to you?"

Nellie looked the letter over and nodded.

"Certainly. K stands for kidnapper, in place of Carker," she said. "The woman Marie must not receive this, eh?"

"No. I'll just keep mum, and not let her suspect that we know of her treachery. When the proper time comes I'll open up on her. I suspected all along that she, in some way, had a hand in this kidnapping business. Now I know it."

"It has just occurred to me that possibly this is a blind to put us off the track," Nellie suggested. "May it not be that the enemy believes we are suspicious, and therefore takes this method of putting us off the track?"

"Your suggestion is not without weight, but I am inclined to believe that Carker has struck for Leadville country, whence, if pursued, he can easily get to the East. We will run the chances, anyhow, and go to Leadville."

Marie entered just then, but on seeing that Nellie was present, soon retired.

The following day the party set out on their long journey for Leadville, which we will pass over until the day before they were due in the mountain city, when an incident occurred worthy of narration.

Cook's Curve, an outlying town, had been reached about sunset, but the party had intended to push on. This, however, was made impossible, as Lady Chandos was taken violently ill, shortly after reaching the settlement, with vomiting and internal pains. She was given a room in the only hotel the town afforded, and a doctor sent for, who, upon appearance, turned out, for a wonder, to be a man of both refinement and education.

After studying the case for a while, he called Dick aside, and said, in a low tone:

"She will doubtless be all right in a few minutes, but I'd advise you to see that she eats or drinks nothing except what you know is pure."

"Oh, then you mistrust—"

"Foul play, of course! There is every reason to believe that she has swallowed poison—probably by eating."

"I will see to the matter," Dick assured him; and after receiving his pay the doctor took his departure.

Dick at once sought Nellie, whom he made his confidante in most everything, and informed her of what the doctor had said, first, however, warning Lady Clare to maintain a rigid watch over her sister.

Nellie listened to the news, with surprise beaming from her pretty eyes.

"And this, too, is Marie's work," she queried.

"Undoubtedly. She is rushing matters rather faster than I supposed she would, but I can't see into her little game. If she is in the employ of Carker, I cannot see why she should want to poison Lady Chandos; for I believe it is Carker's design, in abducting the boy, to ultimately force her ladyship to marry him. Why then this attempted poisoning?"

"I cannot see myself, unless the wily Frenchwoman has some private scheme she is trying to push. What will you do?"

"I cannot tell, until I reflect. Where is Marie?"

"In her room. She has been there ever since our arrival, complaining that she felt too sick to attend to her ladyship. Don't that show guilt?"

"You are right;—yes, she is the leper, in our party, at present!" Dick said, absently, as he drummed upon the table.

"Yes, and I have something else to tell you," Nellie went on. "Soon after our arrival, I heard her ask of the landlady: 'if there was a telegraph office in the town?'"

"She did? Well, Nellie, you're a jewel of a detective. I had no idea you would be so good at the business."

"I am pleased, if anything I can do pleases you, Mr. Dick," she said, very earnestly, as she laid one of her white hands upon his shoulder.

Dick took the second glance at her.

"Don't get too serious in your efforts to please, little one," he said, kindly, "remembering it is your duty to steel your heart against any particular friendliness with married men."

"Married!" she echoed—"you married?"

"Why yes—to one of the dearest little women in the world."

The wife was evidently a little staggered at this, but kept her self-possession well.

"I didn't know that," she said, "but we are all liable to be mistaken in a person."

Just then a note was shoved under the door of the room, and the "shover" was heard to beat a hasty retreat.

Nellie ran and seized it, and handed it to Dick.

"I wonder what news this brings?" and Dick hastily tore it open.

CHAPTER VII.

DICK'S BIG DROP.

THE contents were by no means less than Deadwood Dick anticipated, for he expected to be surprised, and was not deceived.

The note ran as follows:

"Sir:—If you want to find Jerry Carker and the boy, come to the mouth of the Big Blow-out Mine, to-night, at moon-up, and an enemy of his will show you whar to lay your hands on him."

That was all—no signature whatever.

Nellie also perused the note.

"What do you think of it?" Dick asked.

"Looks as if Carker had offended some one of his tools, and he was taking this method of revenging himself."

"Don't look a bit like that, to me!" Nellie declared. "It's only a bait to get you where they can get rid of you."

"Maybe you are right. I've known stranger things to happen. But, at any rate, I've made up my mind to test the matter. I'll go to the Big Blow-out mine; but, mind you, on the alert, and not unprepared to defend myself."

"Oh! I wouldn't go, nor pay any attention to it, if I were you, Mr. Dick. You might be surprised and killed, when you were least expecting danger."

"Never fear. I've had death stare me in the face a hundred times, and in many shapes, but have so far lived to tell of it. I will be back all right—perhaps bringing young Chandos—and if all's well, we will push on to Leadville tomorrow. Keep mum about our little discoveries, and I fancy it will not take long to work the case to a climax."

When near moon-rise that evening, Dick armed himself thoroughly, and made a few quiet inquiries as to the location of the Big Blow-out mine, to learn that it was a shaft, about half a mile beyond the limits of the town, which, though moderately profitable, had been deserted because of a rumor that it was haunted.

Leaving the camp, in the course directed, Dick was not long in gaining a position in what he judged to be the neighborhood of the mine.

Here he paused and listened, but could hear nothing except the wind sighing through the scrub-oaks and pines, which grew in little patches here and there.

Made bold by this, he advanced, little by little, until he was within a few rods of the Big Blow-out shaft, the location of which was distinguishable by the great windlass over its mouth.

From his position the moonlight afforded Dick a good view of the place, yet he could see nothing of human presence in the neighborhood.

"Possibly there is an ambush waiting for me!" he muttered; "but I won't stumble into it just yet. I'll wait and see what turns up!"

He had not long to wait, only a few minutes; then the sound of footsteps were heard approaching from in the direction of the Curve, and soon a female figure, wrapped in a black cloak, and wearing a thick veil over both face and hat, appeared, and came to a halt in the vicinity of the windlass.

"That must be my correspondent, I should judge!" was Dick's conclusion at sight of her.

"If I am not greatly mistaken, too, it is Marie. I'll go and see what she wants."

He thrust his hands into the side pockets of his coat, and they came in contact with a pair of revolvers that nestled there.

Advancing from his place of concealment, Dick approached the veiled woman, who was evidently awaiting his coming.

"Good-evening, madam!" he said, looking at her keenly. "Were you waiting for some one?"

"Yes—for you. You are Deadwood Dick, are you not?" she asked, in a voice which did not sound familiar to him.

"I am Deadwood Dick, at your service, and you, I presume, are the party who sent me an unsigned communication some hours ago."

"Yes, I am the person. You want a man named Jerry Carker?"

"I do."

"Well, you can't have him!" a voice cried from in the rear, and at the same instant Dick was seized by several pairs of hands.

Although he had been alert, the approach behind him had been made so cautiously that he had no suspicion of such an attack until it came.

With all his strength did he try to jerk and twist himself free, but all to no purpose, for they held him as in a vise of iron, while Marie, throwing back her veil, stepped forward, and with cords secured his hands and feet, so that he was a prisoner, in all truth.

He was allowed to stand, however, while his captors came around to get a front view of him.

They were Jerry Carker, Fargo, and another ruffian with a scar up and down his cheek—a trio of as villainous looking men as you would often meet even in the wild West.

"Ho! ho! so we have you, eh?" Carker exclaimed, with a triumphant leer. "Didn't count on our bein' so cute, did you?"

"I presumed there was a trap set, but being in the habit of attacking my enemies in the front, instead of the back, which is the coward's method, I was hardly wary enough!" Dick retorted.

"You call me a coward, do you?" Carker cried fiercely.

"Yes, though I don't know but the average coward would then feel insulted at the comparison. You are a murderer, a thief, a contemptible sneak, and the devil, your master, only knows what else."

Carker drew a revolver, and cocked it, significantly, his face livid with rage. But, before he could use it, Marie knocked it out of his grasp.

"Stop!" she cried, authoritatively. "What did you promise? Don't attempt any murder, or I'll withdraw from the game and denounce you."

Carker uttered a sullen growl.

"Well?" he said, interrogatively.

Marie turned to Deadwood Dick.

"My sharp friend, you see I have just saved your life!" she remarked, with evident sarcasm. "This in reward for your efforts in behalf of her ladyship. Finding it difficult to elude your vigilance, we have concluded to dispose of you until Mr. Carker has time to get away where you cannot find him. To this effect, we have concluded to lower you into this haunted mine, where you can have the pleasure of sojourning, until some kindly disposed spook comes along and sets you free."

Dick did not reply. It was a less terrible fate than he had expected, and he resolved to take it with good grace, having hopes of being able to escape, sooner or later.

He had a small sized idea that pretty Nellie Dean would never leave the mining-camp, without making a diligent search for him.

The great iron bucket was hauled up out of the shaft, by Fargo and the other ruffian.

Ordinarily this hoisting process was done by horse-power, but a crank had also been provided by which a man could raise or lower the bucket at will.

Dick was then placed in it, to which he made no demur, and the bucket was once more lowered into the mine, where the darkness of Stygia reigned supreme, a grim silence prevailing among the authors of the work.

Down! down went Dick, and still down, until it seemed to him that he must be really en route for China via a new line of travel.

Suddenly the rope parted, far above him, and his downward flight was continued with lightning velocity.

Then, he was conscious of a tremendous jar—and remembered no more, for a long time.

When he did recover consciousness, the scene

was materially changed. He was still lying upon the ground, in the mine, but a miner's lamp burning in a crevice in the rock near at hand, and Nellie Dean was bending over him, holding camphor to his nostrils, and applying it to his forehead.

When she saw his eyes open, she gave vent to an exclamation of joy.

"Oh! I was so afraid you were dead, when I found you lying so still and white. Are you hurt much, Mr. Dick?"

"Don't know about that, till I find out!" Dick replied, staring around, to recollect what had happened. "Guess there's no bones broken, though I got an unmerciful thump. Ugh! I feel kind of sore like;" but with an effort he regained his feet, Nellie having cut the bonds. "Oh! I ain't so bad hurt after all. How'd you come down? Hope you didn't take the lightning express that I did!"

Nellie laughed.

"No—I took an accommodation. You see, about as soon as you left the hotel, I hired a couple of rough but honest fellows to come with me, and set out to look after your welfare. We arrived just in time to see you lowered into the well, and the men began an attack on your captors, who, however, succeeded in escaping. When we arrived at the windlass, we found that the rope had been cut, the perpetrators of the deed undoubtedly thinking the fall would kill you. One of the men at once returned to camp, and procured a long rope, and lowered me down here, where I have been, since, working to restore you to your senses."

"You are a noble girl!" Dick said, taking her hand, and pressing it warmly. "No kindness I can ever do you will be sufficient to express my gratitude. But, how are we to get out of this den is the next question to be considered?"

"I have that already arranged. Yonder lies the bucket, and I have fastened the rope to it, by which I was lowered. The other end is secured to the windlass, so that we shall have no difficulty in being drawn up. By the way, the woman Marie was with your captors?"

"Yes."

"What do you propose to do with her?"

"I am not decided. I hardly think she will trouble our party again. If she does, I may not make any mention of this night's work, in hopes of using her as the trap through which to catch Carker. That rascal is no doubt on his way to Leadville ere this. Come! let us go."

They entered the bucket, gave a jerk on the rope, and were slowly drawn upward.

In a few minutes they were once more above ground, and safe from the effects of the adventure.

Paying the two miners liberally for their services, Dick went back to the hotel, accompanied by Nellie, who at once retired to her room, while Dick sat down in the parlor, to smoke and reflect, first having inquired and learned that Lady Chandos was feeling much better, and would no doubt be well enough for the morrow's journey.

He had not been seated long, when Marie entered the parlor, and nodded pleasantly, as though nothing had happened.

"I was just looking to see if I lost a glove here," she said, apologetically. "Have you been out?"

There was no trace of guilt—not even a flush—upon her attractive face, as she turned it toward the Prince of the Road.

"Yes—I just got out, about half an hour ago!" Dick replied, dryly, at the same time wondering why this woman did not adopt the stage, so skilled an actress she was.

"Why, were you in jail?" Marie queried, raising her eyebrows in surprise, and at the same time looking him straight in the eye.

"Yes, in the jail you helped to place me in. Don't play off your assumed innocence on me, woman—it won't work. You are guilty, and your fate is sealed."

She turned pale, and trembled, at this; then, to Dick's astonishment and disgust, she dropped on her knees at his feet, and burst into a violent fit of weeping.

CHAPTER VIII.

DICK "TUMBLES TO" A LIVE LORD.

"Oh! Mr. Deadwood Dick!" she cried pit-eously. "Do not be merciless with me, but forgive me for my sinning and give me a chance to repent and atone. You alone know of my deed, and why ruin my future prospects by allowing the matter to travel further, when you can save me from going utterly to the bad."

Dick surveyed her with little expression of mercy upon his face, and a feeling of repug-

nance tugging at his heart, to see her kneeling there in abject humiliation, before him.

"Realizing that you have been discovered, and that, too, at the risk of your situation, you have concluded to make a clean breast of it and thus get time and opportunity for making sure of your job, next time, eh?"

"No! no! I realize what sin I have been guilty of, and all I want is a chance to do better, and to prove that my intention is good."

"I suppose your intentions were commendable, when you poisoned Lady Chandos, and tried to break my neck!"

Marie turned still whiter, and her sobs subsided.

"You know *that*?" she gasped.

"About the poisoning—yes! You thought yourself cunning and sharp, but you are a bungler at the best. Rise to your feet, woman. I shall watch for any more of your charming little acts, and curb your playfulness, if I see any more of the devil cropping out of you. Go!"

By the next morning Marie had quite recovered from her grief and looked as saucy and piquant as ever.

Lady Chandos, however, was feeling worse again, and so Dick announced his intention of galloping on to Leadville, leaving them to follow in the stage, as soon as her ladyship felt able.

So leaving her to the careful charge of Lady Clare and Nellie Dean, the ex-Prince of the Road mounted his horse and set forth.

The route between the Curve and Leadville was one of the wildest sort, the trail alternately ascending and descending, and being for much of the way lined on either side by forests.

Although well mounted and well armed, Dick anticipated trouble before reaching the mountain metropolis, where in the early days of the town, he had associated his name with robbery, reckless daring and sport; so he kept a sharp lookout, and put his horse to a spirited gallop.

He had half completed the journey, and was crossing a treeless plateau, when he heard the peculiar whirring sound of the lasso.

Quickly slipping to the side of his horse, Indian fashion, he just escaped the noose which had been sent with precision; at the same time he gave a yell that sent his horse flying across the plateau.

Lucky for him that he remained at the side of his horse, for soon after another lasso dropped across the animal's back, then disappeared again, as the horse flew on.

Taking a squint in the direction from whence had come the attack, he saw the heads of men popping up above the tops of rocks.

Quickly reseating himself on the flying horse, Deadwood Dick's vengeful repeating rifle almost immediately spoke, and for each shot came back a wild yell, which proved the deadly aim of the ever-ready man.

Into the forest again the faithful horse bore him at break-neck speed; but now satisfied that the danger was over, Dick reined in the animal, and rode on, glad to have escaped so luckily.

"I don't doubt that I owe this little serenade to his honor Jeremiah Carker," he muttered, as he rode along, nearing Leadville.

"Oh! my great and noble rascal, sooner or later I'll show you that retribution is bound to overtake you; sooner or later I'll teach you that to murder a white-haired old man is one of the greatest of unpardonable offenses, and you shall suffer for your crime!"

He reached Leadville about the middle of the afternoon, thoroughly disguised in a brown wig and full beard and mustache, together with an entire change of clothing.

Stabling his horse, and putting up at a good hotel, he ordered dinner, after which he started out for a stroll.

Although the place had grown much since he was there before, he still knew where there were several resorts of the sort Carker usually frequented, and accordingly he paid them a visit.

But no Carker was to be found.

If in the city, it looked very probable that he was lying in hiding until he should find a good opportunity to escape; so Dick went back to the hotel, and on entering his room found that a note had been shoved under the door during his absence.

With some curiosity he picked it up and read:

"DEADWOOD DICK—This is to inform you that I will never be taken alive, no matter where you follow. The scheme I had afoot for the boy is busted, for I got tired of the brat, and knocked his brains out this morning. As for you, you'll do well to stop just where you are, for if you don't I'll show you how it will not pay you to bother with a bulldog. I shall stay here till I get a chance to wipe you out, and then move on.
J. CARKER."

"All right, Mr. Carker; if you will only be so accommodating as to remain here in Leadville I will be much obliged, as it will save me the trouble of searching. That lie about the boy, though, however much it might strike other folks, does not affect me in the least, as I know you think too much of your prize to yield it up in that way. I'll watch out for you like a hawk."

He went down-stairs, then into the gaming-room that was attached to the hotel proper, and run under one management.

The place was pretty well filled, and drinking was still going on merrily.

One man appeared to be somewhat 'elevated.' He was elegantly dressed and yet vulgarly loud, wore plenty of expensive jewelry, and was overbearing and obtrusive. He wore a luxuriant full beard, and his hair was parted in the middle, as was revealed by his hat being cocked back upon his head.

At Dick's entrance, he rose from the table where he was sitting, and slapped the ex-Prince of the Road familiarly upon the shoulder.

Dick surveyed him, coolly, for a moment. "Well, sir! what do you want?"

The man gave vent to a drunken snicker, and endeavored to take Richard's hands, but failed, as Dick refused to "shake."

"Is that the way you address a nobleman?" the "genteel" ruffian demanded, evidently ripe for a row.

"That's the way I address every one who gets too fresh, no matter who or what he is!" Dick responded, with a grim smile.

"Maybe you don't know who I am since you are so impudent?"

"I don't care who you are, no more than if you were the most insignificant thing on the face of the earth!" was the retort. "You made yourself exceedingly fresh, and I asked you what you wanted!"

"Well, I want you to know that I'm a gentleman and a lord—the son and heir of an earl—and if I choose to slap a man on the shoulder, it's condescending in me to do so. I feel highly insulted at your rudeness, and I—"

"Spit it out if you want to fight, and don't be a coward!" Dick cried. "That's what you want, evidently."

"You're a liar!" his lordship fired back, "and I—" but he suddenly stopped talking, for out went the right iron-fist of Deadwood Dick, and the Englishman went down like a stricken ox.

The sympathizing barkeeper came forward, then, dashed water into the Briton's face, and dragged him into the side room, there leaving him to recover at leisure, while Dick walked leisurely away to another part of the room, to smoke and meditate.

This individual was an English lord, he said, but, judging by appearances, he was a sorry representative of the aristocracy.

Lady Chandos's husband was a lord, too, and as Dick had from time to time learned from Lady Clare, was, as she expressed it, "an overbearing man whom no one could bear—wild, reckless, and intensely jealous of his wife."

Might not this same individual be the same noble Briton, following her in her travels?

An amused smile came over the sport's disguised face at the thought of the thing.

"One thing is certain. Her ladyship and husband do not particularly admire each other, nor do they live happily together. I have often noticed a pained, disheartened expression upon her face, when speaking of her husband, Lord Chandos. If this is the style of a man she has got, I don't wonder she feels bad sometimes. If the fellow comes around like a gentleman, I'll work him up and see what there is in him."

It was not long ere the Briton recovered; then he arose and arranged his soiled costume as best he could, and inquired for the "insolent puppy who had knocked him down."

Deadwood Dick was pointed out, and he approached the sport looking somewhat the worse for wear, but full of fight or bluster.

Walking up to Deadwood Dick, he glared down at him a moment over his nose, which was swollen three times its ordinary size, then spat direct into the sport's face.

"There!" he cried, savagely. "That is an insult, and if you want satisfaction, as gentlemen get it, come outside!"

Dick arose, and wiped his face, apparently very calm; but any one acquainted with him could have told by the gleam in his eyes that all the tiger in his nature was aroused.

A crowd had almost instantly gathered, with eager interest.

It was a moment before Dick could compose himself enough to speak—then he said:

"I shall be happy to meet the British baboon

at once. Weapons, revolvers. Lead ahead! I'll try and make a gorilla of him before I'm through with him."

"You'll have to take to the outskirts of the town, gents, as ther day of street scrimmages is over, here, on account of thar porlice. Here's Skin Sullivan—he'll show ye a right peart spot to die," the barkeeper said, sententiously. "He's a good slugger, too, is Sully, an' a first-class second in any skewrap."

"Mr. Sullivan will act for me!" the lord said.

"And I'll act for the gamey chap, I will," a deep gruff voice exclaimed, belonging to a man clad in a suit of overalls, stagy boots, and greasy sombrero. He wore bushy black hair, and an immense beard and mustache to match, and was about as brigandish-looking a human as one would care to meet of a dark night, with his belt full of weapons as they were now.

Dick surveyed him, and nodded. It could not matter much to him who was his second.

"All right. Lead ahead!" he said. "Let's get down to business as quick as possible!"

They left the saloon, and struck for the city limits, followed by one of the biggest crowds that ever witnessed a fight in Leadville.

The sun was near to setting when the dueling ground was reached, and no time was lost in marking off the space, which the Englishman insisted should be fifty paces.

"He evidently wishes to make the distance long enough so that he will not be dangerously wounded!" was Dick's thought, "but I reckon I've got the beauty that will tickle him!"

He took a case from his coat pocket, and therefrom extracted a weapon—a field revolver.

There was a unanimous exclamation of admiration from the crowd at sight of the deadly tube, and they involuntarily rushed forward to get a closer view of the weapon, the equal of which, for beauty, they had never seen.

CHAPTER IX.

A DESPERATE WOMAN'S DESPERATE GAME.

ON leaving the Curve, it had been Dick's last request to Nellie not to mention anything to Lady Chandos about the poisoning, and very likely she would have acted according to his wishes but for the woman Marie, who, on every occasion took pleasure in casting some slur at Nellie, which she believed might annoy her.

Several words passed between them, until finally Marie expressed an insinuation that fired all the temper the pretty orphan girl possessed, and under the impulse of the moment she went to the ladies' room, and revealed to Lady Chandos and Lady Clare all that was known relative to the poisoning.

To say that both were astounded would be expressing it mildly, for their astonishment knew no bounds.

"I am loth to believe this criminal charge against Marie!" Lady Chandos said, soberly; "still, I have never quite put implicit confidence in her."

She then ordered Lady Clare to go and fetch the Frenchwoman.

Marie soon made her appearance, her face somewhat pale, and her manner nervous.

"Marie!" Lady Chandos said, "do you think you could find your way back to your home in Havre?"

"I fear not, lady. I am very little traveled, you know. Why do you ask, my lady?"

"Because it becomes my duty to discharge you. We need not necessarily dwell upon the whys and wherefores, but suffice it to say that you know full well the cause why you are discharged, and will I hope feel grateful toward me for allowing you to escape merited punishment so easily. Say nothing, but go. You were paid up your full salary yesterday."

Whiter than before was the treacherous woman, now, and she turned upon Nellie with a gasp, one of her hands partly concealed behind her.

"Do I owe this to you?" she hissed, her eyes burning with an unnatural fire.

"If you mean the telling of the truth, yes. I was ordered by Deadwood Dick, to make no disclosures until he perfected plans for the capture of Carker. But when you insulted me by assailing the only gift I have left that I value most—honor—forbearance ceased to be a virtue! Take care! I see you have a stiletto ready to do murderous work with, but I consider this much easier, quicker, and more effective," and the resolute girl produced a little revolver and cocked it.

"Curse you! curse you all! You have not outwitted or done for me yet. I will have revenge, mark you, and it shall be such a revenge that you will prefer the torments of hell to it!"

Then she was gone, leaving the two English ladies in anything but an enviable frame of mind, while Nellie was but little concerned at the threat.

"Marie will go to Leadville, no doubt," she said, "to have a conference with Carker, and I am going like a sleuth-hound on her track. I may in the same trip capture both, before Deadwood Dick can. You will not be afraid to come on in the stage to-morrow?"

"Not afraid, dear, but I am afraid to have you make such a rash venture," Lady Chandos said, anxiously.

"Never fear for me! I have had just enough hard experiences in the West to make me wide awake!" Nellie said, earnestly. "I know, before I go!"

As soon as she could complete the necessary arrangements, she ordered one of their best saddle horses and mounted.

She had learned that Marie had left some minutes before, so she set off at a good gallop on the open track or road which led to Leadville.

Her one desire seemed to be near the handsome knight of the West—Deadwood Dick—her mind was ever on him; some irresistible spell of human magnetism seemed to draw her toward him.

She knew it was wrong that she should allow herself to let the feeling grow upon her, but she—she could not help it, was her consoling thought, when she allowed herself to consider.

But as she rode on, and her mind's eye was gazing at the handsome face and figure of Deadwood Dick, her reverie was rudely interrupted by a harsh grating voice exclaiming:

"Halt, girl. Advance another yard and I'll make you feel the vengeance Marie promised you!"

Nellie Dean looked up from her reverie to behold the wily Frenchwoman sitting upon her horse, a few yards ahead, a light sporting rifle held leveled for instant use.

"What do you mean?" Nellie demanded, quietly.

"Didn't I tell you I should have revenge, you hussy?" she cried. "I'm going to have it, too. Something told me you would follow me, so I just waited here for the sole purpose of waylaying you. Now that I've got you right where I want you, I'll show you that it were better to betray the devil than a fierce-tempered Frenchwoman. Do you know what I am going to do with you?"

"I haven't the slightest idea, I am sure," Nellie replied, with apparent composure.

"Well!" Marie said, significantly, "I am going to rob you of your beauty. That is worse than death, to one with any claim to good looks. I shall cut off your hair, disfigure your face and—"

"I beg your pardon, my royal queen of viciousness, you will do nothing of the kind!" a deep, thrilling voice exclaimed, and an elderly gentleman stepped from a thicket near to where the woman were halted, followed by a younger man.

"You have laid a most villainous plot, which you can hardly expect to carry out. So you had better go!"

Marie uttered a scream at sight of the speaker, and turned very white.

"You!" she gasped—"my God! you?"

"As you see," the man replied, calmly. "One would infer that you had seen a ghost."

Marie did not reply, but wheeling her horse put spurs to him and dashed away toward Leadville as fast as she could go.

The elder man then turned to Nellie. He was, in truth, noble looking, with a kindly-expressed, full-bearded face, and a form of manly beauty, while his dress and his habitual bearing bespoke a person of more than ordinary culture.

The younger man was almost a fac-simile of the elder, for the resemblance between them was very striking, though the younger man wore no beard, except a mustache.

"My dear young lady, it was opportune that we were near, or that vixen might have done you harm," the elder gentleman said.

"I am very glad, sir, you were near," Nellie said, simply, "for she is a very bad woman, and has sworn to kill me. But you must excuse me, as I wish to follow her. Is it far to Leadville?"

"Yes, a good half a day's ride. You cannot reach it until after dark, and I would advise you not to attempt to go without an escort."

"Oh, I'm not afraid. I'll be more careful, during the remainder of the journey."

And bidding them good-by, she galloped away in pursuit of Marie, determined not to

give up, until she had trailed the French tigress down into the hands of Deadwood Dick, at least.

"I've lost my heart, uncle!" the younger man said to his companion, when the girl was gone. "In that girl, you've seen the future Lady Cecil Falconer!"

"Fudge!" the elder retorted. "I'll cut you off without a penny if you ever mention it again."

It was in the early morning when Marie finally arrived in Leadville. She appeared very much exhausted, but stabled her horse; then made a tour of the better class of hotels and examined their registers, evidently looking for some one, and a disappointed look came over her face at every failure to find the name she sought.

Finally she entered the Clarendon, and as she did so uttered a gasp of delight as she saw a man ascending the stairs. She quickly followed him, and entered his room immediately behind him.

"Marie!" he exclaimed, at sight of her, her sudden appearance giving him a start.

"Yes, Marie!" she cried, seizing his jeweled hand, and covering it with passionate kisses, "your faithful Marie—the only woman who has ever proven true to you."

"Then you have the evidence to confirm my convictions, eh?" he demanded, his eyes fairly blazing.

"Mon dieu, Lord Chandos, I sincerely wish I could say no; but I have not that welcome news to bear you. When I left England, employed to spy upon Lady Chandos, by you, I could have sworn to her purity and love for your noble self. But it has, alas! proved as you feared. Her trip to America was but to escape the vigilance of your watchful eye, that she might bask in the smiles of her first love!"

Lord Chandos paced the floor more after the frenzied style of a madman, than like a sane person.

"You tell me all this!" he hissed. "Oh! God! why cannot I get my hand at her throat! Ugh! I am going mad, I believe."

He was violent for a few minutes, then quieted down suddenly, and said:

"You have seen them together?"

"Yes, on more than one occasion. I met Sir Falconer last night, en route to see her."

"Does she receive him with evident pleasure?"

"Judging by some of their romantic Shakesperian scenes, I should suppose that she considers him every inch her Romeo. The fact is, she is no longer a wife to you, and I have heard her declare, with an oath, when under the influence of liquor, that she would never live with you again!"

"Nor shall she. I'll end the disgrace, while here in this lawless country, by killing them both, and then go back to London a wiser man."

"But you must first fulfill your promise to me, please to remember, Lord Chandos."

"What do you mean, woman?"

"Bah! do not be so innocent! You promised me that if I would spy on Lady Chandos, and prove her unfaithful to you, you would fill her place with me."

"Bosh! Nonsense! Do you take me for an idiot? The idea—marry a menial! Ha! ha! the idea!"

Marie's eyes flashed.

"You'll find out you can't put me off. If you don't marry me at once, when you go back to London, I go too, and I'll make things lively for you, you may rest assured. I know too much for your peace of mind, so make the best of a trying situation."

His lordship winced.

"Deuce take you!" he growled. "If you want money say so, and don't take such a round-about way of getting at the matter."

"Pooh! I don't want money! I want a home, and a husband. I want you, because you can put me where I can shine above those who look down on me, now."

The other laughed, wickedly.

"If you don't clear out, I'll put you where you'll shine for eternity," he said. "I'll never marry you, so settle on that. If you want a thousand pounds to clear out to France and keep your mouth shut, you can have it—otherwise not."

"I will choose the not!" she retorted, savagely. "I will show you that it is not profitable to tamper with a woman's affections. I did not mention to you that your son, Cavanaugh, has been stolen from Lady Chandos, and I alone hold the knowledge of his whereabouts. Good-day, sir," and she left the room.

CHAPTER X.

"AN OLD OFFENDER" ANNOUNCED.

BEAUTIFUL revolvers had often flashed in Leadville's sunlight, and killed their man, but nothing half so magnificent as that held by Deadwood Dick had ever been seen by any of the admirers of manly sports.

The steel was plated with gold, the handle was of pearl and a dozen diamonds of medium size were set in its sides, to say nothing of the most superb solitaire which gleamed in the butt.

"Take care, gents! It's danger to get too near a costly weapon like this!" Dick warned, dryly.

"Order!" cried Dick's black-bearded second. "This hyar pic-nic must proceed, as both gents are anxious to get into one another. My name is Boliyar, I tell yer, and I'll see this thing kerried on on the square."

"So'll I," announced Sully, as he was called among his associates. "Git all ready gents! When I say three, blaze away at each other fer all you're good for. I'll hev a pine box fixed up long enuff so yer knees won't get humped when we chuck ye in."

The antagonists took their positions, facing each other, and deliberately cocked their weapons. It was easily to be seen that neither paused to consider the results that were liable to follow.

"Are you ready, sir cur?" his lordship cried, impatiently.

"Ready, sir baboon," was Dick's taunting answer.

"Then get ready!" the "slugger" cried, loudly. "One! two! three!"

Bang! bang! bang!

There were three pistol reports, instead of two.

The Englishman fell to the ground, wounded very slightly in the left side.

Deadwood Dick stood unhurt, although he had heard two weapons speak besides his own, and had heard two bullets whiz unpleasantly close to his head.

Looking quickly around he caught sight of his second running toward a convenient shed, with all his might and main.

It was he, then, who had fired the third shot! If so, it needed no more to inform Dick that he had been within arm's reach of the man he wanted—Jerry Carker!

Again had the villain attempted the Sport's life and escaped—for he was now too far off to easily pick off with a revolver, as Dick perceived; but with a fierce exclamation he sprung away in hot pursuit, leaving the crowd to attend to the wants of the lord, who really had purposely fallen, on being wounded, to avoid further punishment.

A fleet runner was Deadwood Dick, but the desperado had the advantage in getting behind the shed, so that no bullet could hit him.

In this way he succeeded in gaining some place of safety by the time Dick had reached the shed, and the Sport was baffled for the time being.

"I'll have him, if he is in this town, however!" he gritted. "It was a bold move on his part, coming forward to play my second, and more's the wonder he didn't salivate me for good."

He went back to the dueling ground, and found that the Englishman had gone back to the hotel.

After some little trouble Dick succeeded in enlisting half a dozen men in his service, whom he posted about the city with a purpose of keeping a close watch for the villain Carker.

It seemed only a matter of time ere the capture must be made.

Nellie Dean arrived in town during the forenoon, and found Dick, to whom she communicated what is already known to the reader.

Dick listened, but did not chide her, as she was afraid he would.

"Well," he said, "we shall have to look to her movements here, and may in that way see Carker. That he is lying low, somewhere about town, I am certain, but so far I am not able to locate him, nor are my men."

Dick then related his experience with the Englishman, whom he believed to be Lord Chandos; after which he conducted her to a hotel several blocks from the Clarendon, and she retired to her room to get a few hours' rest.

Lady Chandos and Lady Clare arrived that afternoon, and were taken to the same hotel, where Dick took care to register them under assumed names, and warn them to keep within doors, as he did not want them to know of Lord Chandos's presence, nor he of theirs.

Her ladyship was feeling greatly improved

from her late illness, but talked and worried constantly about her boy, who she was fearful would be harmed.

That evening a paper had in it this item:

"AN OLD OFFENDER IN TOWN.—It is learned, at this office, through an anonymous letter, that the notorious outlaw and road-agent, Deadwood Dick, who some time ago made himself many enemies hereabouts, owing to his defiance of the law, and his desperate deeds, is once more in town, in disguise. The informant neglects to give further information, more than to say, 'watch out for him,'—not even a description of his disguise. As there are still several rewards standing for him, the latter, with his former description has been referred to the police, and we are sanguine that it will not be long ere the festive Richard languishes in our local 'jug.' That he is here planning out some new campaign of devilry, is evident, and the sooner his actions are nipped in the bud, the better—or rather the worse for the business of our local undertakers."

And, as fate would have it, the 'festive Richard' was among the first to purchase a copy of the paper, and read the interesting notice concerning himself—interesting because it was of vital importance to him, when he remembered that Leadville was no longer the utterly lawless mining town of the past.

CHAPTER XI.

DICK'S WARNING AND CARKER'S BLUFF GAME.

DICK was not surprised.

He had rather expected that his reappearance in Leadville would endanger his liberty, but for the papers to be first to open on him, was rather unexpected.

Who had given the information—Carker, or Marie?

He hardly knew which, as either certainly was possessed of the necessary cunning.

Having read the paper, he went at once to the hotel, and donned an entirely new disguise, consisting of a luxuriant pair of side-whiskers, of jetty black, with sweeping mustache and hair to match, and a full Mexican costume, such as is worn by a general. With a preparation, he also expertly dyed his face and hands to a darker hue, and when his arrangements were all complete, he was an ideal picture of a high-toned Greaser.

The next thing was to test the disguise, and complete some other little arrangements.

Taking his bundle of baggage, he made his exit from the hotel by a rear stairs, unseen, and went to another hotel and registered as General Guyamirez, of the city of Mexico.

Having acquired considerable of the broken Mexican lingo, it helped him in furthering his attempted deception.

Half an hour afterward, he went back to the Clarendon, and registered under a different name than he had adopted at the other hotel.

After sauntering around awhile he dropped into a chair near where Lord Chandos and another man were engaged in conversation and in which the detective soon was drawn.

After awhile the third man left, leaving the pseudo-general and Lord Chandos alone.

Fully an hour passed in exchange of confidences, after which, having acquired many points to satisfy him that Chandos was a heartless wretch, and Lady Chandos a sinned-against woman, Dick took his departure, assured that his disguise had not been penetrated so far, although he saw persons pass him whom he remembered from his previous Leadville experience.

Going to his lodgings, he wrote a note to Lady Chandos not to be alarmed at his non-appearance, as he was working up the case in another disguise.

He also wrote to Nellie to the same effect.

After sending these to the hotel where they were stopping, he wrote out a poster to fasten upon the door of the assailable newspaper office when it should become quiet enough.

PROCLAMATION!

"Whereas, a certain sheet of Leadville having announced the presence of an old offender in this city, that individual takes this method of informing the people that he is in the city on business, and proposes to remain here until he sees fit to absent himself. The person who gave the paper notice was one of two persons concerned in a shameful abduction of a child with a view of extorting money from the parents, and it is for the purpose of capturing these sharks that Deadwood Dick again visits Leadville. Those concerned will please take note of this—my old challenge is still applicable. Let me alone and I'll let you; crowd on me, and you are welcome to the benefit of what you will get in return.

"Yours as ever, DEADWOOD DICK."

Dick did not write this as a bluff to invite notoriety, but as a warning that he was still too much of the past-and-gone dare-devil to tolerate insult.

Jerry Carker was no fool.

Indeed he was an unusually shrewd and sensible man did he put his gifts to their right use.

Lady Chandos and sister had not been located at their hotel two hours before the wily Carker, in his disguise of a red-bearded ballwhacker, had found them out, and the number of their room.

Lounging about the hotel for awhile until he saw Lady Clare and Nellie go out for an evening walk, the villain watched his chance to sneak up-stairs and made his way to the door of Lady Chandos's room.

Softly trying the knob, he found to his satisfaction that the door was unlocked.

To open it, quickly enter, and then close and lock it behind him was but the work of a moment, when he wheeled around, facing her with a revolver in his hand.

She would have screamed only that she was too terrified to give utterance.

"Sh!" he cautioned. "It is useless to raise a fuss. I am Carker, and I mean business. I have come to arrange terms—or kill you; one of the two things!"

CHAPTER XII.

A BRUTAL MISTAKE AND A STRANGE RESCUE.

MARIE had struck deeply when she had informed Lord Chandos that his wife was untrue to him.

There was little in the man's nature that was good or pure; he was envious, selfish, mean and treacherous, and was intensely jealous of handsome Lady Beatrice despite the fact that he really cared no more for her than he did for any pretty woman.

Consumed with all the torments of his burning passion, he went once more to his room after his conversation with the disguised Deadwood Dick.

"I'll kill 'em! I'll kill 'em both!" he raved. "I'll learn her that, in this country, she cannot shake her lord and master off without a decree of divorce!"

He procured his revolvers, loaded all their chambers, and then set forth upon the street as soon as it was dark.

"Something tells me I shall meet her to-night," he muttered, "and if I do, curses be on me if I don't remove one disgraceful blot from the fair name of Chandos. I'll shoot her and her paramour, too."

For some time he paced up and down the principal street, attracting considerable attention, partly from the fact that he had made himself a reputation as a bad duelist, and partly because so much fury was now expressed in his countenance.

It was perhaps an hour after coming upon the street that his lordship saw a man pause upon a corner, as if waiting for somebody.

His suspicion at once aroused, Chandos paused not far away, despite the fact that it was beginning to rain a little, and his fine costume was in danger of getting wet.

He had not long to wait. In the course of twenty minutes, a woman came tripping across the street, joined the man, and the two went off together.

Chandos followed. So great was his rage, that he could scarcely refrain from yelling out for them to halt.

The woman was invested in a long oil-skin ulster, with hood attached, and very little of her face could be seen.

The man was well dressed, and wore a luxuriant brown beard.

"This is their trysting-place, is it?" his lordship hissed. "I'll break in on their duet in a way that will surprise them."

The pair were evidently lovers, for they walked slow, and seemed evidently wrapt up in each other's society.

Directing their course from the main street into one of the more quiet thoroughfares, they continued on, with their unsuspected enemy lurking behind them.

Finally Chandos's jealous spirit could bear no more. He saw the gallant Romeo stoop and kiss the Juliet of his promenade.

"Curses on you both!" Chandos gritted. "Down to perdition you shall both go, and I will be free!"

Leveling his revolvers, he fired repeatedly, until every chamber was emptied. Then he saw the couple lying on the walk ahead, struggling in death-throes.

A realization of his terrible crime partly dawned over him, and with a gasp of terror, he turned to run from the spot.

But flight was impossible, for on turning, he

was seized by half-a-dozen officers, and handcuffed before he could give utterance to protest.

"Let me go! let me go!" he cried. "You have no right to arrest me for shooting my own wife and her paramour!"

"You have not killed your wife, my fine bird!" the chief of police said, "but instead, have killed two of our most esteemed citizens, Mr. and Mrs. E—, who have but recently been married. If we can keep you from the mob that will come to lynch you, you may be exceedingly thankful. Come!"

His lordship went, trembling in every limb, and cursed himself with every breath, at the fearful mistake.

That death would be his reward for the crime, he had but little doubt, and then all his estates would go to his wife, to be enjoyed by her and her old lover, while his bones were mouldering in a felon's grave.

With the ferocity of a madman he tried to get away, but it was no use. The officers were too strong for him, and he was soon securely locked up in jail.

There was no mistaking the tone in which the villain, Carker, spoke—he had come for a purpose, and he meant business.

Poor Lady Chandos was pale and weak with affright, but she managed to speak, finally, though it was with an effort.

"Sir, I pray that you will not torture me with your presence," she said, in a piteous tone. "I am not feeling well, not having fully recovered from the effects of the poison administered to me by your partner in crime, so I trust you will be humane enough not to worry me until I am stronger."

"Dear Beatrice, accept my assurance that I did not come here for any such a purpose as that. But, I don't understand about the poisoning. Surely, I had no knowledge of that, nor anything to do with it. Did Marie do it?"

"She did, and got her discharge."

"Too bad. She will prove a worse enemy to you than ever I could. But, Lady Chandos, I have come to talk business, now. You tell me you have no longer any affection for me, as of old."

"Certainly not. Indeed, I can see little of the former Sir Ferrol Falconer about you."

"Well, such being the case, I presume it would be useless to press my suit?"

"Quite absurd, sir; alike dishonorable and impossible."

"Well, I've about come to that conclusion myself, and consequently do not feel so badly as I otherwise might. Therefore, we will pass that matter by, by considering terms for the boy. You see, it is beginning to become quite apparent that there are healthier parts of the country for me than the West, and I've a desire to find out where they are, without delay. I have several reasons for wanting to slope. The kid, although there is money in him, by holding him back, is a nuisance to drag around the country. Therefore, I am going to dispose of him to the highest bidder."

"Monster! why do you keep my child away from me?" Lady Chandos cried, in anguish.

"Simply because you have a fat bank account, and I desire to taste of it!" Carker chuckled.

"Then go, you inhuman wretch, for you shall never handle a penny of it!" her ladyship cried, firmly.

"Oh! well, I'll try Lord Chandos then, and succeed. By the way, I dare say you have not heard the latest sensation."

"I am ignorant of what you refer to, sir."

"Why, you knew that Lord Chandos suspected you of coming to this wild country to meet me, and followed you hither?"

"I knew nothing of the kind!"

"Well, he did come, and found out that you came here to meet me, and have met me repeatedly. He has even learned, beyond doubt, that our meetings have created a deal of talk, and is naturally enraged. To-night, a few moments before I came here, he was arrested and lodged in jail, for murdering a man and woman, whom he believed to be me and you!"

Lady Chandos turned deathly white, but did not answer—so Carker went on:

"The murder was a clear case, and Chandos will meet the penalty of the law, unless he is taken out and lynched—something not improbable—or is rescued. I happen to be the only one who can rescue him, as I have the power to do it. If he will pay handsomely for the child, he can have his liberty and the child, too. If you will see him, and go him one better, the

child is yours. And, now, which shall it be—you or he—who gets the child?"

"I will not give you a cent. Deadwood Dick will recover my boy for me, and he shall get the reward—not you!"

"Curse your stubbornness! I'll see about that! I'll kill the kid, outright, before that dare-devil will ever get hold of it. As for money, you have it right in your pocket, or about your person, and I'll have it before I leave this room, or I'll have your life!"

He sprung toward her with a savage resolve expressed in his villainous face, that boded her ladyship no good.

She quickly left her chair, and uttered a piercing shriek, as he seized hold of her.

"Shut up, curse you! Give me your money!" he hissed, savagely.

"Never!" she returned bravely, at the same time shrieking for help, again.

The next instant footsteps were heard running along the hall, and the door was burst open with a crash.

With a yell of defiance, Carker made a break for life, and dashed through a rear window, carrying sash and glass with him; but not until he was seen and recognized by the two men who burst the door in, and came to Lady Chandos's rescue, who were, strangely enough, the same parties who had rescued Nellie Dean from the vengeance of Marie.

An expression of mutual recognition and astonishment came upon the faces of Lady Beatrice and the elder gentleman, who sprung forward with outstretched hands.

"Beatrice!—Lady Chandos! Is it possible that this is you?" he cried, gazing at her, rapturously, as he seized her hands in his.

"Oh! Sir Ferrol, I am so glad! I have been so terribly shocked and deceived!"

"Deceived? In what way, pray," and he led her to a seat on the sofa, while young Cecil, his nephew, also became seated, after acknowledging an introduction, and explaining the cause of the screams to the landlord, who made his appearance.

In trembling tones her ladyship went on to explain how Jerry Carker had represented himself to be the lost Sir Ferrol Falconer, and the other troubles that had beset her since leaving the boat at Seaport.

Sir Ferrol heard her through—then he said: "This man Carker I know only too well, and am now after him. In Australia, he was my valet and confidant, and got hold of all my secrets and past history. He then stole considerable money from me, and left the country."

"But of yourself, Sir Ferrol—you have not told me of yourself, yet."

"You shall hear, Beatrice. You remember how, years ago, and just previous to what was to have been our wedding day, I was arrested for forgery in London. Circumstantial evidence was used against me so strong, and the enormity of the offense was so great, that I was packed off to Van Dieman's Land for ten years."

"It wasn't more than two years later that I escaped, and under disguise and an assumed name, went up into the Australian fields, with the intention of secretly communicating with you. But, after learning of your marriage, through an English paper, I gave up all hope in that direction, and resolved to remain where I was. While there I amassed an immense fortune, which I now carry about my person in the form of thousands of diamonds."

"A year ago Carker left me, carrying off a small fortune. A few months ago my nephew here, came and found me, bringing with him evidence of my innocence, my freedom papers and honorable exculpation, and a highly complimentary letter from the Queen's counsel; so that I am now *en route* to assume my former rights. But, I am sorry you are in the midst of so much trouble, Lady Chandos. I trust your life is, but for these temporary troubles, exceedingly happy?"

"I wish I could tell you yes, Sir Ferrol," she replied, with sadness, "but I cannot truthfully say so. In fact, I do not believe a more unhappy woman lives."

In a low tone, she then told of what Lord Chandos's jealousy had brought him to, and many other little things that had served to make her married life with him a thing of so much misery that she had fled to the west coast of America to get as far away from him as possible.

Sir Ferrol listened with a darkening brow.

"I always privately imagined that Lord Chandos would make a disagreeable husband, but am most sorry it has turned out so. Will you go to see him at the jail?"

"Yes, to-morrow, though I am satisfied that he will be vindictive enough to kill me, if he gets free."

"If he has committed murder, as you say, I much doubt if he ever gets free. Border justice does not stand long on technicalities. I will, however, go out and learn what I can for you, in regard to the matter, and if there is any possible way I can be of service to you, you are aware, I trust, that you are at liberty to command me."

"Considering you my friend, I shall not hesitate to address you when I believe and need your assistance," Lady Chandos replied, with a bow, and a grateful glance.

Sir Falconer and young Cecil then took their departure, and went forth into the street.

Here an intense excitement prevailed, over the double murder that had been done—for both of the victims had died almost immediately after being shot.

The vicinity of the jail was black with people, and the tone of the conversation showed that there were strong indications of a forthcoming lynch picnic, in which Lord Chandos was to be the central figure.

The police, however, were vigilant in their efforts to prevent a reign of mob law, or it is doubtful if Chandos would have been suffered to crouch within the protection of his dungeon ten minutes.

That the Englishman was a coward now needed no further verification than by a peep into his prison, where he was huddled up in one corner, white and shaking, as i in an ague-fit.

In the meantime, while the threatening crowd surrounded the jail, Deadwood Dick had "dropped" upon his man, in the Carbonate saloon.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW DICK DIDN'T WIN.

THE Carbonate was, and yet is, we presume, one of the roughest holes to be found in Leadville. Loafers, bummers, blacklegs and rascals of various types commingled there, and the papers denounced the establishment as a place not safe for an honest man to enter after dark.

Noticing the rough crowd on that side of the street, late in the evening, Dick concluded to "drop in" and make observations, as it was about the style of a place he imagined Carker would frequent.

He was still in his disguise of a Mexican General, and had no fear of detection, even by Carker's sharp eyes, should he perchance encounter him.

After purchasing a cigar at the bar, he sauntered about the room, and finally saw a red-whiskered, dirt-besplashed, rudely-dressed miner, sitting at a table, handling a pack of cards, as if he were anxious to try his luck with some one.

The beard and hair looked so much like one of Dick's former disguises, that it at once attracted his attention; so sauntering over to the table, he sat down opposite the apparent bullwhacker, and said:

"I see you are idle, stranger; what say you to a social game of poker?"

"I hain't no 'jections as I knows on," the man replied, in a voice which, if feigned, was cleverly disguised. "My handle is Sam Jones; what's yours?"

"General Guyamirez, of Mexico," was Dick's answer. "Quite an excitement about the murder."

"Yas. They orter lynch that cuss, an' will, I opine," Jones said, at the same time laying a cocked revolver at his right hand on the table.

"What's that for?" Dick asked, in pretended surprise.

"Oh! that's simply a matter o' form. I allers does that when I don't know who I'm playin' with, ye see, jest ter settle disputes with."

"I don't know but what it's a purty good idea," Dick said, drawing one of his self-cockers and laying it at his right.

They played that game and two others, quietly, Dick allowing the bullwhacker to win.

Finally, he gave a yawn and picked up his revolver with the apparent intention of restoring it to his pocket. Instead of doing that, however, he turned it suddenly upon the man of the red whiskers!

"Carker, you're mine! Move a muscle and I'll blow your brains out!" he said, in a low, quick tone, the positiveness of which there was no mistaking.

Carker growled out a terrible oath, but obeyed orders.

"You're off yer base!" he gritted. "I'm Sam Jones, and you'll find et out ef ye don't put up yer tool."

"I'll run my chances of your getting dangerous. I have got you down fine, and my eye is right on you, so that if you don't come precisely to time I will salivate you."

"On account of the kid, you dassent," Carker declared, cunningly. "When I die the secret of the whereabouts of the boy will also die."

Dick had thought of this, but did not hesitate.

"I reckon that won't work. I guess when it comes right down to one minute before death, you'd squeal. I am after the boy, but that is not my main object. Jerry Carker, do you remember that poor old man you brutally murdered up in Big Valley?"

The man chuckled, an expression of something like pride coming over his face.

"Yas, I reckon I got in my revenge on that old rooster in the most approved fashion," he said. "Won't never wallop another man, that's certain."

"Nor you won't ever murder another man, Carker. When I saw your brutal work, I registered an oath to take your scalp back to that valley as a trophy to show how much I loved the good old man you murdered. I then set out on the death-trail to fulfill my oath."

Your scalp now lies within my grasp, but I will not take it. I'm a fair man, and a square man, and here is what I have to propose: You take me to where Lady Chandos's boy is concealed and deliver him up to me. We will then come back here, and I'll give you twenty-four hours start ahead of me, in a race for your life. If you are the smarter, long life and liberty lie before you. If not, death! If you do not accept these terms, I will pay no more attention to the Chandos case, but avenge my own case, by dropping you dead where you sit. You have heard Deadwood Dick. Consider his only terms for five minutes, after which, if you do not accept, you'll need a coffin!"

"I have considered. I am not ready to pass in my checks. You shall have the boy," Carker said.

Carker's acceptance in a measure surprised Deadwood Dick, who had imagined he would have more trouble with the fellow; but he was by no means taken off his guard by the ready acceptance of the other.

"Well, if you mean business, get up and lead ahead," he said, "remembering that I am watching you like a hawk all the time, and ready to drop you at the slightest provocation."

"Ye needn't trouble yerself about me!" Carker growled. "When I say square, I mean square. Come erlong till I got ter my room in ther hotel to git ther key."

"The key to what?" Dick demanded.

"To ther place whar ther boy's shut up," was the reply.

They left the saloon, Carker leading, and went down the street to a large shanty hotel, which corresponded favorably with the saloon they had just quitted.

Carker went up-stairs to a front room, and Dick promptly followed, resolved not to give his prize any chance whatever to escape.

After searching about for awhile, the rascal produced an old rusty key, and signified his readiness to depart.

"Before you go, I opine you'd best leave your weapons all here on the table, where you can get them on your return," Dick advised. "I won't have to watch you quite so close on the way to where the boy is concealed if you do this."

"Anything to accommodate you!" Carker gritted, with bad grace, as he complied with the request. "All I want is a squar' deal in this matter, an' I'll be squar' myself."

"Correct. See that you are, and you will stand a chance to win," Dick said, grimly.

They then left the place and walked away toward the western outskirts of the town, in which direction Carker stated they would have to go for the boy.

It did not take long ere the gleaming lights of Leadville were left behind, and they were struggling along the gloomy stage road that led to some of the surrounding shanty towns.

"Reckon Lord Chandos will get his neck stretched!" Carker remarked, as they proceeded.

"So he ought," Dick averred, heartily. "I am positive that her ladyship would hardly mourn her life away over his demise. Nor will his death help along your case to any great extent, if I know myself. You'll have to adjourn your nuptials."

"That remains to be seen," was the sullen answer; after which silence reigned between them for some time.

The drizzle of rain which had fallen earlier

in the evening was now changing into a heavy fall; but the two enemies strode on.

Soon they turned off the main trail and began to clamber up the forest-covered mountain, the branches of the trees somewhat sheltering them from the storm.

Beneath this cover it was so dark that it was hardly possible for Dick to see his man, but he kept close beside him, resolved not to let him escape if it were in his power to prevent it.

But a surprise was sprung upon him when he was least of all expecting anything of the kind. They gained a sort of table-land on the mountain plateau, and were tramping along through the leaves and darkness, when Dick suddenly found himself go crashing downward through leaves and sticks, and knew that he had been led directly onto a dead-fall, such as is usually prepared to catch grizzlies in.

While from above Carker uttered a wild, revengeful laugh—the laugh of a demon.

Down! down! went Deadwood Dick full twenty feet, when he succeeded in landing upon his feet in the bottom of the pit.

"Hello! How do you like it down there?" cried the triumphant voice of Carker, from above. "Got the boy, didn't you? Purty smart man, you are, Dickey, but I kin see ye an' go ye one better, allee samee! Was goin' to juggle me right off into the next world, wasn't you? but you got handsomely left on that. I've got you, now, just where I can use you to suit my own convenience. Curse you, it will be good-by for you now. I'm going to gather a lot of stones and mash you into a jelly!"

With these words Dick heard the ruffian walk away.

What should be done? He had no doubt that Carker was brute enough to do all he had promised; so something must be done at once.

It would be useless to think of climbing out of the pit.

Groping about he soon found a shallow hole that had been dug in the side, at a level with the bottom.

Drawing his knife he soon had a primitive cavern excavated of sufficient dimensions to admit of his stowing himself snugly away in it.

Lucky it was, too, for he was barely fixed, when he heard Carker above.

"Well, hello!" he cried. "How d'ye feel down there? Ready ter shuffle off yer coil?"

"Oh! don't! don't kill me, I beg of you, good Mr. Carker!" Dick whined, in piteous accents.

"Please don't throw stones down here. I cave, and I'll do anything in the world for you, if you'll only let up on me!"

"Can't do it!" Carker declared. "You'd kill me, ef ye got ther chance, and I'll be shot ef I don't make pummice of you. So say yer prayers!"

"Fire away!" Dick cried, fiercely.

And the next minute a heavy stone was hurled down into the pit, at which Dick gave vent to a terrible groan, after which he kept mum, and allowed Carker to fire the stones down into the pit to suit his convenience.

Fully ten minutes were occupied in this interesting ceremony; then the rocks ceased to descend.

"Deadwood Dick has had the dead wood come on him this time, for sure," Dick heard the villain mutter as he leaned over and glared down into the hole. "I'll git the boy, now, I reckon, and take him back nearer to town, where he'll be handier, when I want to use him."

Soon after Dick heard the ruffian tramp away.

Nothing was left for the man-hunter but to remain where he was, until daylight should enable him to determine the best way to get out of his predicament.

It was not long until morning, and Dick was not sorry, for daylight brought to him a discovery which he did not hesitate to improve.

A single strong grape-vine dangled down into the pit.

Trying this Dick found that it would hold his weight, and made haste to climb up out of the hole.

"Now, for Leadville!" he gritted. "I'll go back there; and if I don't make it warm for that rascal Carker, my name is not Deadwood Dick. I almost fancy that it will take me but a few days to close my interest in this case—then I'll away to rejoin my bonny Calamity in our valley home, never again, I trust, to go upon the trail!"

CHAPTER XIV.

PLAYING HER CARDS.

BELIEVING he had summarily disposed of his greatest enemy, Carker was in the best of spirits

when he appeared upon the streets of Leadville the next morning. To him there was not the shadow of a doubt that Deadwood Dick was numbered among the dead; consequently, having no particular fear of any one else, he laid aside his disguise, and appeared as his natural self.

The excitement over the murder had materially diminished; still the vicinity of the jail was yet thronged, and lynching formed a theme of general conversation.

The authorities, therefore, considering the existing state of feeling, had determined to put off any hearing of the case until matters had quieted down, which was a great relief to Chandos when he heard of it, although he still feared that the people might uprising and lynch him, in spite of the law.

During the day following his arrest, Marie was brought to the grated door of his cell, and the warden called through:

"Prisoner, is this your wife, as she states to us?"

Chandos took the cue, as a drowning man might clutch at a straw.

"Yes, she's my wife," he answered, gruffly.

The warden then unlocked the door, and admitted Marie, after which he closed it, saying:

"Remember—only ten minutes; so make the most of it."

He then marched away.

Marie went over and sat down on the iron bed beside Chandos.

"Well, you've cut a fine caper for a nobleman, haven't you?" she said, with sarcasm.

"I'm not aware that you are concerned in the matter, madam!" he retorted, with a frown.

"Oh! you needn't be so independent," Marie retorted, "because I'm the only one you have to look to for help now. If you come to terms, it won't take long to get you free. If you stay here another night, you'll be seen dangling to a tree, before morning. If you could hear the sentiments expressed on the outside you'd tremble in your boots."

"What do you think they will do with me anyhow?" he asked, doubtfully.

"Hang you, of course," Marie said, decidedly. "If the law don't do it, the enraged people will. I understand that Lady Beatrice and Sir Ferrol, who are more constantly together than before, are using their utmost efforts—quietly of course—to have you taken from jail and lynched."

Chandos, of course, grew furious at this.

"Curses be on them!" he said. "Would that I had made no mistake in the matter. What do you want, Marie?"

"I want you!" she replied, emphatically.

"I love you—always have loved you—always shall. There is now no reason why we should not marry, since your wife has proved false. Marry me, and I will release you, restore to you the little boy, and we will go at once to Castle Chandos."

"You haven't got the boy," the murderer protested, warily. "I'm satisfied on that."

"I know I haven't got him, but I can easily get him. Carker has got him, and it will be an easy matter for me to get him from him."

"I don't know about that. He is a low villain and not under your control at all."

"I am not mistaken. I am playing my cards carefully. If I cannot win in one direction, I will in another. While I am working you up, Carker is doing the same with Lady Chandos. The long and short of it is, the one who pays the most gets the boy, providing you want your liberty."

Lord Chandos was silent, some minutes. He was considering the case as it appeared to him. On one hand was the law of the Western country which he knew to be less merciful than the East. On the other hand, the idea of marrying Marie was decidedly repugnant; but could it be any more disgusting to marry her than it would be terrible to be hung?

Marie finally grew impatient at his delay in answering.

"Come!" she said, sharply. "I have only five minutes more. Decide at once, or never."

"You are in a hurry to tread the halls of Castle Chandos, eh?" he replied. "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do, and it is all I will do, I swear. Go you and put Lady Chandos and Falconer out of the way, first of all, so that in marrying you I can do so legally. Next, get possession of the boy, and then procure my release from this jail, and my escape to a place of safety. On these conditions only will I wed you, and give you a marriage present of ten thousand pounds."

Marie's little French eyes sparkled venomously.

"It's a bargain!" she cried, resolutely. "I

will set to work at once, and have you out during the coming night, without fail. Mind! there's to be no trifling about this matter."

"My word is good!" he replied.

"Very well. Here comes the keeper. You be very quiet and all will be well."

Marie went from the jail with triumph gleaming in her eyes.

Shortly after she had gone Lord Chandos called the warden, and said:

"If my other wife should make application to see me, positively refuse to admit her, as I do not care to see her at all."

"What! have you two wives?"

"Yes. Please remember what I say. I do not want to receive Number Two."

"Well! well!" the warden muttered, as he strode away.

Later in the day Lady Chandos approached the jail, where the warden was standing upon the steps.

"If you please, sir, I would like to see my husband, Lord Chandos, who has been arrested for murder," she said.

"Sorry, ma'am; but I cannot gratify your wish," the official replied. "His lordship's first wife has been to see him, and he requested me not to admit any other that came."

"What, sir? My husband has no wife but me!" Lady Chandos cried, in great astonishment.

"Can't help it, mum, if he hain't got any. Them's his orders, and they're bound to be obeyed."

"Then you will not admit me?"

"Nixy!"

"But, I'll appeal to the authorities!"

"Appeal to the devil, for all I cares. I runs this hyar place, I does, an' I won't allow no second-wives to bother his lordship. So, bounce!"

Shocked beyond expression, Lady Beatrice wended her way slowly back to the hotel. She was beginning to see through it all.

CHAPTER XV.

A RED REVELATION.

ON his return to Leadville, Deadwood Dick made his way by an unfrequented route to the hotel where he had left his disguises, and after paying his bill, took his package, and once more made his way out of town to a clump of timber which lay on the stage trail to Oro City.

Here he made a careful and complete change of disguise, the result making him a typical swell of the genuine nabob pattern.

After inspecting himself in a pocket mirror, he was satisfied that he would pass muster, and accordingly secreted his bundle and returned to town.

Almost the first person he met was Nellie Dean, who was coming out of a dry goods store, and upon whose face was an expression of anxiety.

Was she anxious about him? Dick wondered.

Something prompted him to test the girl, for in his present disguise he looked really "too utter for anything," so to speak, with his luxuriant blonde side whiskers, mustache and curly hair, to say nothing about a suit of "darling" clothes that fitted him most elegantly, and a *chapeau* that was the latest rage; and his eyes, too, were shaded by nobby glasses.

Doffing his *chapeau* as he met Miss Dean, he paused and said:

"Aw! excuse me, my pretty miss, but could you direct a bewildered stranger to the Clarendon?"

"Indeed, sir, I am a stranger myself, and could not inform you," Nellie replied, civilly, but by no means pleasantly.

"Aw! how fortunate I have met one a stranger like myself. They say misery likes companionship. Might I have the pleasure of your further acquaintance, divine creature? It would be one great pleasure to form social acquaintance with some congenial spirit."

"If you are a gentleman, allow me to pass, sir!" Nellie retorted, coldly. "If you want acquaintances, go where they are plenty for the asking."

She endeavored to pass him then, but he blocked the way.

"Nellie!" he said, in his usual voice.

She gave a quick start, and a look of glad surprise came over her face.

"Is it you, Mister Dick? I was never more surprised. I have been greatly worried about you, and I had a terrible dream last night which I cannot shake off, and I am sure something terrible is about to happen to Lady Chandos."

She then related how Carker had attempted to rob the lady, and how the real Sir Ferrol had

turned up in the nick of time; also concerning her ladyship's failure to see Lord Chandos.

"I want you to devote your whole attention to watching over Lady Chandos so that no harm comes to her."

"I, too, have a premonition that some peril is overhanging her, and of course it can come from but one of two directions. While you watch her I will make another attempt to close this case in a satisfactory way."

They then separated, Dick sauntering about town, wide awake to everything that was going on.

He saw one thing that was not unexpected to him—that the real feeling over the murder was growing no less.

Most of the advocates of lynch law, too, were "nerving up" with whisky. It consequently looked as if Chandos would not pass the night undisturbed.

For several hours the disguised Dick strolled about town, on the watch. Once he caught a glimpse of Carker, in a crowd across the street, but did not care to disturb him just then.

Later he saw Marie in an ice-cream saloon. She had finished eating, and was figuring or writing upon a piece of paper.

"I wonder if she is up to some new scheme?" was Dick's thought, as he went out. "I want Carker first—I can attend to her later."

She was indeed planning out her campaign.

"I must spy out the boy's whereabouts. Then, to-night, Lord Chandos must be released. Prior to that, however, comes the disagreeable attempt to in some manner dispose of Lady Chandos, and also of Carker, whom I so strangely mistook for the real Sir Ferrol. Humph, it's been mixed up all around, in a very provoking and exciting manner. Who of us two years ago could have conceived of all this tragedy and comedy?" and the designing woman smiled sardonically. The vision of the splendors of Castle Chandos, over which she was to reign, was too powerful a magnet to allow her to hesitate as to means to be adopted to secure that end, so she decided to act resolutely and promptly.

During the afternoon she saw Carker in the street, and was successful in corraling him—more than Dick had been able to do. The impostor was evidently surprised to see her.

"Come!" she said, "I've great business on hand, and no time for parley. Come where we can talk in private, if you want to make money."

"Like to know what you're up to?" the rascal growled. "If you want the kid, I'll tell ye no! That's my spec!"

"But it must also be equally mine. Give me the custody of the boy, Carker, and I'll make you rich!"

"Bah! I ain't so badly heeled as it is, and when I make a raise from her ladyship, I'll be ready to start into business with a full hand."

"But I say you can make more by sticking by me. I have everything arranged whereby I alone will soon be Lady Chandos. Then when Lord Chandos dies, you stand a good chance of being his successor, even if you are not Sir Ferrol Falconer."

"It won't wash! I consolidate with nobody. I have done for my enemy, Deadwood Dick, and now shall have everything my own way. So you'll have to go it alone if you enter the race."

"You'll regret not joining me!" Marie warned, turning away with gall in her heart toward the scamp.

Carker evidently proposed to play his own game yet awhile, and risk the results, whatever they might be.

Not long after Marie's conversation with him, he sent a letter to Lady Chandos, who, after reading it, handed it to Sir Ferrol.

It was as follows:

"I see it is not worth while to fool with you, as I mean business. I'm going to leave here to-morrow, and you can bet I'm not goin' to tote the boy along with me. If I don't see two thousand dollars in hand in good United States cash by sunset, you'll know that by that time your kid has gone to be an angel, to prove which I'll send you a piece of his scalp. I am bizness; so ef you want to negotiate, send answer by the boy who brings this message, and I'll wait on you for the cash, after which the boy is yours to command."

"Lovingly your JERRY CARKER."

Sir Ferrol read the message with a scowl.

"Where are you to take the word to?" he demanded of the boy who had brought the note.

"I won't give it away," was the prompt response. "I promised not to tell."

Falconer turned to Lady Chandos, on whose

face was an expression of anxiety painful to witness.

"I would accept these terms," he said. "You will never miss the money; besides, I know the rascal's nature. He will do just as he promises for spite, as he has no care for life, so far as taking it is concerned."

"But what surety have I that I will ever see the child after giving him the money?"

"No money must be given him until he produces the child. I guess we can arrange it all right."

He seized a piece of paper and wrote upon it:

"All right. Come at once."

This he gave to the boy.

"Take it to the man who sent you," he said.

The boy nodded and departed.

Night had fallen over the city when Carker appeared.

Well, you concluded to come to terms, eh?" he said, as he entered Lady Chandos's room.

"Yes, conditionally," Sir Ferrol responded.

Carker started violently at sight of him, but Sir Ferrol gave no sign or expression that he had ever seen the rascal before.

"What do you mean?" Carker growled. "Needn't think ye kin come any skin games on me, fer it won't work."

"No games will be tried. But before the money is paid into your hands we must set eyes on the boy, to be satisfied that everything is square on your part."

"Nixy! That won't work for a cent," Carker declared. "Money in my fist first—then all you've got ter do is foller. I left word ef I wasn't back in an hour ter kill ther boy, an' my pard he'll do it, too, you bet."

Sir Ferrol looked at Lady Chandos.

"I suppose we'll have to do it," he said.

"Put on your wraps, and when you are ready, pay this scoundrel the money. If he attempts to play any games on us then, I'll drop him. He knows I never fire wild."

Carker gave a grunt, which was as much as to say that he was aware of Falconer's marksmanship.

Lady Beatrice procured her wraps, and donned them, then handed a roll of greenbacks to Carker.

"There, sir, is the money. Now see that you take me to my child!"

"Yes; and that you attempt no funny business, or I'll murder you as quick as I would shoot a rattlesnake."

"I'm square. Come along."

They left the hotel and went down a side street to the very edge of the town, where they came to a weather-beaten shanty of considerable size.

"This is the place," Carker announced, trying the door. "Reckon Fargo's got full, an' gone to sleep."

He produced a key, and unlocked the door, and they entered.

A candle on the stand lit up the room. Before them was a sight which made them recoil.

Weltering in his own life-blood, as he lay stretched upon the floor, was Carker's ruffianly associate, Fargo. A dagger was buried to the hilt in his bosom, and he was stone dead. Stuck in his belt was a piece of paper, with words upon it, rudely scrawled in human blood. It read:

"Marie came to get the boy, but found this man dead and the boy gone."

What did it signify?

Carker uttered a terrible curse.

"That she devil has been here, hey?" he roared. "If the boy's gone I'll murder her."

He sprang away up the stairs.

"Quick! Follow him, or he will escape with the money!" Lady Chandos gasped, and Sir Ferrol darted in hot pursuit. But when he gained the landing above, he heard Carker leap through an open window to the ground, and then run for his life.

After ascertaining that there was no child in the loft, Sir Ferrol rejoined Lady Beatrice.

"Foiled after all," he said.

"Do you think the boy has ever been here, Sir Ferrol?"

"Yes. I believe Carker's intentions were sincere; but finding that some one had stolen a march on him, he resolved to run rather than give up the money."

"What do you make out of the bloody message?"

Sir Ferrol took another look at the paper before answering.

"One of two things seems to me sure. Either Marie came and killed the man and stole the child, and left this to turn off suspicion, or your friend Deadwood Dick did the deed, secured the

boy, and put this notice here to involve Marie in the tragedy."

"God grant that it may be the latter way!" Lady Chandos ejaculated fervently. "What is to be done?"

"I fail to see what more we can do to-night than return to the hotel and await a report from this Deadwood Dick you have told me about. He may throw some light upon the matter in the morning."

They left the shanty and made their way back to town both disappointed and disheartened at the ill-success of their evening's adventure.

CHAPTER XII.

A SHE-DEVIL'S DEEDS.

In her first move toward accomplishing her purpose Marie had signally failed. By some means she had discovered the house where the boy was concealed.

Fargo keeping watch and ward below, she was compelled to climb up to the rear window, and thus gain an entrance, which she did with wonderful agility. The loft was only one room, but had a large closet, which was locked with new padlocks.

Listening at the door she heard the stifled sobs of a child, and knew that little Cavanaugh was there.

At the same instant she heard Fargo singing, below, a Bacchanalian song, and moving about.

Well she knew she could not pry off the hasps without noise, nor secure the boy until the guard was silenced.

"I'll fix him!" she muttered, a demoniac gleam in her baleful eyes. "Dead men tell no tales."

She drew a stiletto from her bosom, and glided down the stairs to take the half-drunk wretch unawares. His back was toward her, and approaching noiselessly, she struck the terrible blow with unfaltering nerve, that buried the blade to the hilt in his broad bosom, and he dropped heavily to the floor, dead when he touched it.

With face flushed and breath coming in excited gasps, she bounded back up the stairs. A cry of rage escaped her lips then.

The closet had been unlocked, and the door stood open, but there was no one inside!

Some one had entered while she was at her murderous work below, and secured her prize.

For a moment she was fairly blinded with rage, but controlling her passion, she finally made her way from the shanty, back into the town.

Here she went to her room, in a second-class hotel, and sat down to cogitate.

"Deadwood Dick is not dead, for all Carker thinks so," she said. "It must have been him that followed me and secured the boy, for no one else could have done it so quietly. But now it is more important than ever for me to act promptly. Lord Chandos must be got out of that jail to-night, and Lady Chandos and Sir Ferrol must be silenced. I think I've prepared pretty well for their case. Lady Chandos, I'll bid you a long adieu!"

She took from her valise a small package, which when opened proved to be candy wine-drops.

"Ah! long life to French chemists for their shrewd ways of dealing out poison," and the arch-schemer smiled. "Each one of these contains deadly, tasteless poison enough to kill the most robust person."

She then procured a box of similar candies from a shelf.

"These are American goods. I will remove the first layer, and substitute my imported drops in their place. Then the undertaker will have work to do to-morrow."

She suited the action to the word, then tied the box up neatly, and wrote upon it in a masculine hand, with pencil:

"Respects of D. D.

Boy All Right."

Canning triumph gleamed in the woman's eyes, as she finished her work.

"That will settle that matter beyond peradventure," she mused. "If there are not four corpses in that hotel by next sunrise, I will have sadly missed my reckoning. And now, as for the prisoner, I see but one hope, and that lies through me. There will no doubt be an attempt to lynch Chandos to-night, and I can see but one chance for him to escape. I must visit him and remain in his place, while he escapes in my clothing. It's a risky job, but it must be tried. If they find it's only me, after he escapes, they can do nothing more than release me, because I am guilty of no murder—at least so far as they know."

It was a desperate remedy, but she resolved to try it.

Leaving the hotel, she found a boy and gave him a dollar to take the candies to Lady Chandos, and say to her that Dick sent them.

She then produced from the closet in her room a number of articles of disguise and a ring of keys to fit handcuffs—when or where obtained it would be difficult to say. She evidently was a master hand in villainy—a woman old in crime.

The warden sat on the steps of the jail as she approached.

"Can I bid my husband good-by?" she asked. "I am going to leave on the early morning stage."

She slipped a twenty-dollar gold-piece into his hand, and without a word he admitted her to the jail, and to Lord Chandos's cell.

"I'll be back for you presently," he called out as he strode away.

"Give me all the time you can," Marie replied, with an extemporized sob, then turned to Chandos.

"Sh! When you leave this jail it must be as me. Do you see? Not a word now, while I prepare you."

With lightning rapidity she clipped off his beard with a pair of scissors. Then she disrobed herself, and he did the same, and they exchanged garments, all except underclothing.

In five minutes Lord Chandos looked so nearly like Marie that not one in a hundred would have noticed the difference in the darkness, the veil being pulled down over his face.

Marie, by the aid of false beard, and donning the Englishman's suit, had also made herself resemble his lordship very closely.

When the warden came the pair were sobbing very hysterically in each other's arms.

"Come! come! you'll have to let up on this!" he cried. "Tragedy won't draw big houses byar. They like fun—ther pure cream o' comedy, such as a lynchin'-bee fer instance. Come, ma'am, you'll have to go out now."

Lord Chandos rose mechanically, but secretly trembling that he should make a blunder, and followed the warden from the jail, the latter letting him out at the rear so that he might not have to encounter the rabble that was again collecting in front of the jail.

Once outside the jail, Chandos chuckled villainously.

"Fare thee well, Marie, dear!" he said. "Your loss is my gain!"

CHAPTER XVI. CONCLUSION.

THE package of candies that Marie had sent to Lady Chandos was received without delay when the party at the hotel were together in the parlor—Sir Ferrol and Mr. Cecil, Lady Chandos, Lady Clare, and Nellie, who had worked herself by her simplicity into the friendship of all.

"Why, this is from Deadwood Dick," Lady Chandos announced, in surprise. "He is such a nice man. Thank God! listen to this. Here is written in pencil:

'Respects of D. D. Boy all right.'

Oh! he has got possession of dear little Cavanaugh!"

A glad expression beamed upon every face but that of Nellie Dean. Her face was as white as death.

She rose from her chair and staggered across the room like one intoxicated, while all gazed upon her in astonishment.

She reached the side of Lady Chandos and gazed down at the writing with a strange tremor in her frame.

"Don't dare—that's Marie's writ—" she gasped, then fell upon the floor in a swoon.

Great consternation ensued. Sir Ferrol seized the box from Lady Chandos, and placed it upon the mantle, while the others raised Nellie, and applied restoratives.

Undoing the box, Sir Ferrol examined the contents.

"By Heaven, I believe we've had a narrow escape from a horrible death!" he cried, "all through the timely warning of this noble girl. I would not touch one of those candies for all in this wide world."

"Why, do you think there is poison in them?" Lady Chandos asked, in astonishment.

"If my suspicions are not all wrong, there is some devil's dose here, and Miss Nellie, I think, will agree with me when she recovers."

In a few minutes Nellie was able to sit up, and collect her scattered senses.

"The candy?" was the first thing she faintly articulated.

"Is all put away, to await an explanation of your affright," Sir Ferrol said, while Mr. Cecil seemed very much devoted in his self-appointed duty of fanning Nellie back to life.

The girl breathed easier when she heard Sir Ferrol's words.

"I never was more frightened," she said. "It struck me instantly what was in the box, and that the wicked woman, Marie, had sent them for a murderous purpose. I knew it when you read what was written on the box, Lady Chandos, and a sensation of sickening horror came over me lest you should eat one of the candies ere I could reach you!"

"It is a fortunate thing you were here," Sir Ferrol said, while the ladies embraced Nellie, "for otherwise I dare say we would all now be suffering untold agonies. You shall have your reward for your great service this evening."

"You bet she shall!" cried Cecil, so impetuously that all eyes but Nellie's were turned curiously upon him.

"The candies have not been proven poisoned yet, and this may really be much ado about nothing!" Lady Clare suggested, and she left the room as if Cecil's proximity to, and evident interest in, pretty Nellie Dean was of less moment to her than something in her own room.

The box was left severely alone on the mantle, and soon all parties retired to their different apartments. But not an hour had passed when most terrific screams were heard issuing from the parlor, and among the first upon the scene were Sir Ferrol and Cecil, and the landlord, Big Jake. Upon the floor rolling about in excruciating agonies was a Chinese servant, while near by was the box, half emptied of its candies.

The poor fellow lived but a few minutes, and all was over.

The landlord was given an explanation by worried Sir Ferrol, at which he laughed gruffly. "Pooh! that's nothin'," he grunted. "I knocked one o' the skunks in the head the other day fer stealin'; serves 'em right!"

And then he seized the dead Celestial by the pigtail, and dragged the body down the stairs and out into the back yard as if it were but a dead dog he was putting away.

It had been a night of incidents, but it was elected that there should be one more, of a thrilling character, ere night's somber mantle lifted from mother earth.

Though early in the evening, a considerable rabble had gathered in the vicinity of the jail; but the crowd gradually dispersed, and finally quiet reigned over the bustling city of Leadville. But it was the strange quiet that usually betokens the outburst of a storm.

The town seemed deeply wrapped in slumber; but some people were abroad, for one by one dusky figures began to gather once more in the vicinity of the jail, and the hushed murmur of many voices was ere long heard as the crowd thickened.

Marie, in her prison cell, heard the dull Babel of sound, and her face blanched white with terror.

Were they coming to lynch her? Would they lynch her when they found out she was not Lord Chandos? Suppose they should out of revenge on her for her connivance in his escape?

The thought was torture to her wicked, sin-stained soul, and her face blanched to a death-pallor there in the darkness.

Outside the crowd still grew, but as if it were a prearranged plan to meet after the law-abiding people were in bed, there were no loud or boisterous demonstrations.

Evidently all were waiting for some one or something.

Soon, however, a man pushed his way through the crowd to the steps of the jail, near the door of which stood a capital tree for lynching purposes, as if it had grown there to meet the requirement.

The man who mounted the steps was a brother of the murdered woman, and held a huge key in his hand.

"Get a noosed rope ready!" he ordered. "Half a dozen strong men follow me."

Marie began to shiver with terror as she heard the door of the jail thrown open, and to shriek as the avenger approached and entered her cell; but her frantic protestations were disregarded, and she was dragged from her cell to the steps of the jail, more dead than alive.

Here she was held in a vise-like grasp, while her neck was noosed.

"Mercy! mercy!" she screamed, in piteous accents. "I am not Lord Chandos—I am a woman!"

"It matters not!" the brother of the mur-

dered lady cried. "You released the murderer of my sister, and, curse you, you shall hang in his stead!"

"Mercy! mercy!" she shrieked at the top of her voice. "Oh! God, is there no one to save me?"

Only a dismal groan from the crowd was the answer.

It was perhaps merciful that she fainted then, of sheer terror, and they strung her up ere she recovered consciousness:

Let us draw the curtain.

Lady Chandos knew nothing of the tragedy, until the next morning.

She had the body of Marie secured and given a decent burial at her own expense.

Vigilant scouts had been sent in search of Chandos, but as yet no trace of his whereabouts had been discovered.

In the afternoon Dick appeared at the hotel, bringing with him little Cavanaugh Chandos, whom he had rescued from the shanty where Carker had him imprisoned.

He was in disguise, but the reception he received satisfied him that he was recognized among those whom he had served, in a way that would never be erased from memory.

Nellie was not present, but the others made much of him, and Lady Chandos and Sir Ferrol each tendered him large sums of money, which, however, he promptly but respectfully refused.

"I did not undertake to restore your child to you for any pecuniary consideration, Lady Chandos," he said, "for it was but an act of humanity, and I am glad it has turned out so well. I must now bid you all farewell, as I have another mission to perform, ere I return to my wife at home."

"Before you go I will insist upon pressing on you a present to remember us all by," Sir Ferrol said, taking a little case from his pocket and handing it to Dick. "And if you ever come to England, visit Castle Chandos, and I trust some of the present party, who owe so much to you, will be there to welcome you."

Dick opened the case, and his gaze fell upon the largest and handsomest diamond it had ever been his fortune to see.

"This I will accept as a token of remembrance," he said, in a choked voice, "and I'll never forget the pleasant acquaintance our mutual adventures have been the means of establishing. Wishing you a safe journey across the ocean, I will bid you all farewell!"

He shook hands with them all then, and left the room.

In the hall outside, he came suddenly upon Nellie Dean, who had evidently been listening.

"Nellie!" he exclaimed.

"Oh! Dick, are you going away? Shall I never see you again?" she articulated, in a husky voice, and then she threw her arms about his neck and wept.

"Sh! my child!" he said, chidingly, but tenderly. "This is all wrong. You must not be thus affected."

"But—but what is to become of me? Oh! let me go with you to be your—your sister. Please do not say no!"

"No, no, Nellie! I cannot do that. You must control yourself and forget. Here are a thousand dollars, which came to me unexpectedly. Take it as a gift of one who has the greatest respect for you. Go with Lady Chandos. She will gladly take you, and do well by you."

He kissed her, tenderly, and gently put her off; then glided down the stairs, with these words ringing in his ears:

"Come back, Dick! oh! come back!"

He could not go back—not for his mind went back to Calamity and their peaceful valley home, where he yearned to be once more, in the anticipation of a little Deadwood Dick, to brighten their after lives.

Although the detectives of Leadville sought for Deadwood Dick, they were never destined to see him again, and though they sought for Lord Chandos, they were not destined to find him, in life.

During the evening following Chandos's escape from jail, he hung about the rear of the hotel where the Chandos Falconer party were stopping, and late at night made an attempt to enter a second story room through the window—for what purpose only himself could say.

It chanced to be the proprietor's room, and the proprietor chanced to be at home.

There was a pistol-shot, a groan, a dull thud and—silence.

After breakfast, the following morning, the proprietor observed that he had shot a burglar,

about bed-time, and presumed likely it would be wise to send for an undertaker.

Search was made, and Lord Chandos's body found and recognized.

It was the natural end of a rough and profitless life.

Lady Chandos ordered the remains interred in the Leadville cemetery and shed no tear over that closing scene. It was the passing away from her lips of the bitter cup.

A week later, after hard dodging and trailing on their respective parts, Carker and Deadwood Dick confronted each other in a wild mountain pass.

The Seaport ruffian and impostor was lying on the ground, partly paralyzed from a fall, and was near to death.

True to his manly instincts, Dick set assiduously to work to give the sufferer all possible aid, and succeeded in getting him quieted down into a subdued and repentant spirit.

Before he died, Dick talked so kindly to him that the wretch cried like a baby, and offered up a sincere and feeling prayer to the Almighty to not judge him too harshly for his sins and transgressions. After he died, Dick laid him away in a mountain cave, and with a feeling of sadness and joy commingled, turned westward, *en route* for his home where Calamity shone as the bright particular star!

The Chandos party returned to England in safety, never to forget their wild American experience.

While it is probable that Sir Ferrol and Lady Chandos will soon marry, it is also not improbable that Mr. Cecil will lead pretty Nellie to the altar, for she had been adopted by the lady as her companion, and proved her worthiness of all the love showered upon her. Lady Clare reigns as a belle of London society, a bright, gay, spirited girl, who will make a brilliant match, and reign as society queen in a very aristocratic circle.

THE END.

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